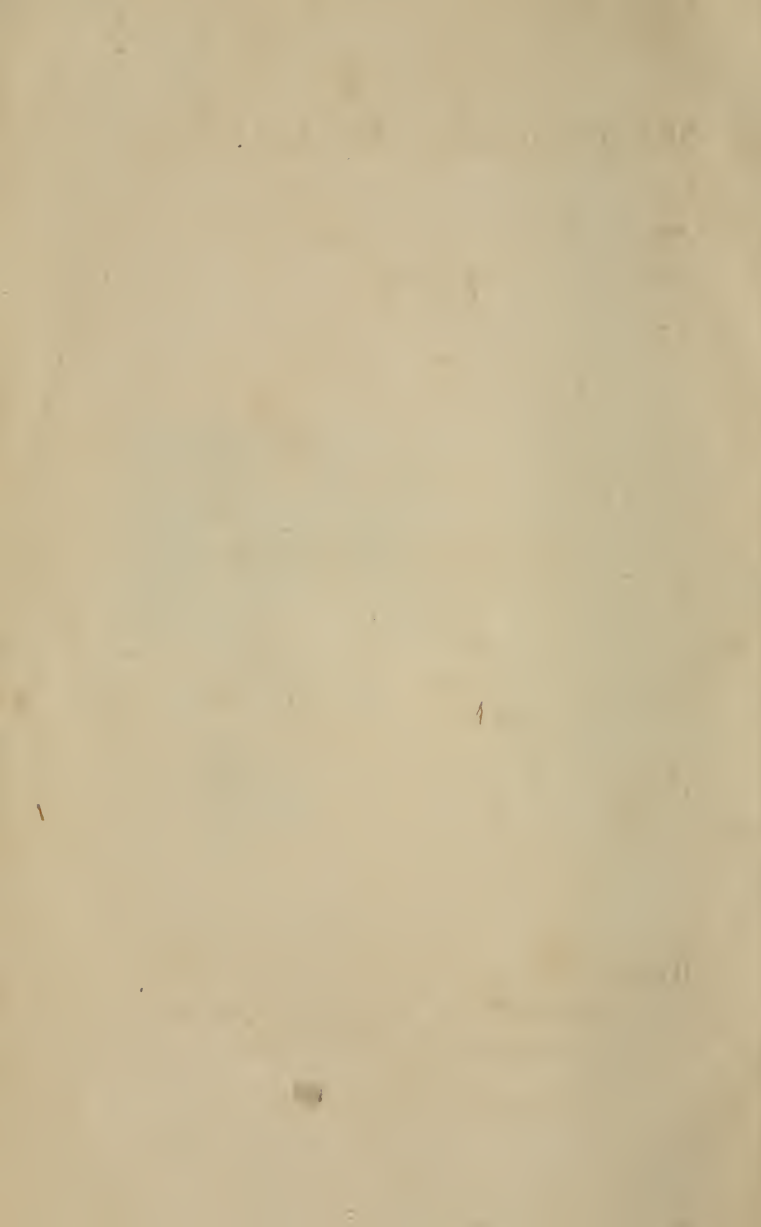


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# SEYMOUR AND HIS FRIENDS.

A NOVEL.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“THE SECRET MARRIAGE.”

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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SEYMOUR AND HIS FRIENDS.

## CHAPTER I.

A dim and deeply bosom'd grove  
Of many an aged tree,  
Such as the shadowy violets love,  
The fawn and forest bee.—MRS HEMANS.

THERE is something peculiarly beautiful in the opening view of the New Forest, as the traveller approaches it either from the small town of Lyndhurst, or skirts its wide extent in passing inland from Southampton. At all times and seasons its venerable and picturesque character must be fully appreciated

by the artist and the poet, while to the historian it abounds with pleasant reminiscences of the olden time, when uncultivated nature luxuriated in her reign of liberty, and the voice of the hound and huntsman echoed merrily through glade to glade.

How much of this primitive and grand simplicity is changed! Every where there is evidence of man's cultivating hand; the deer still congregate, but in comparatively small numbers, and the smoke of dwellings rises amid many generations of oaks and elms, which recall the legend attached to the name of William Rufus.

On the borders of the Forest, a few miles from Lyndhurst, the family of the Nevilles had flourished during some centuries. Formerly distinguished by their nobility and wealth, they were compelled to yield to the influence of time's universal law, and were

content at present to be considered as merely a much respected and quiet family living in affluence but not splendour.

Mr Neville had never stood for the county, nor had his father before him. He and his young wife associated with few out of the immediate neighbourhood, had never given balls, and rarely dinner parties. Mr Neville was known more in his library than at public meetings, and Mrs Neville more in her nursery than at reviews or flower-shows.

Linwood, the old family place, also looked grave and substantial as the trees which surrounded it, and all seemed in keeping with quiet harmony and old-fashioned manners and ideas.

But Mrs Neville became the mother of a son and heir, which is an event generally specified by society as forming a fitting epoch

for abolishing the old order of things, and for a short space at least establishing the reign of gaiety and frivolity on the sober foundation of every-day life.

No two people differ more from each other than the same person may differ from himself under a variety of circumstances. This might also apply to Linwood on the first anniversary of the birth of its heir, which was to be celebrated on a scale approaching the grandeur of former generations.

It was a soft July night, almost too soft and beautiful to be turned into the brilliant artificial day, displaying all that luxury or comfort might require within, and all that nature and art had assisted in producing without. The notes of birds, the hum of insects, were still to be heard, the air was perfumed with the odour of the summer flowers, and gently stirred the muslin draperies which over-

hung the open windows; even the moonbeams did not fail to assist at the revels shining across the bright green turf, and lighting up the stems of many a distant clump of trees.

It was all beautiful and peaceful without, but within the moment had arrived on which the hopes and expectations and preparations of weeks had been lavished.

All the neighbourhood had for some months looked forward to the fête—half the country had been invited to it.

Linwood itself could scarcely be recognised in its gala dress, while the spirits of the younger portion of its inhabitants overflowed in every conceivable demonstration of active joy, in dancing from room to room, and practising steps on polished oak floors.

The evening was to open with a child's dance in one of the smaller rooms, while the grand saloon, which was the centre of a suite, was

devoted to the amusement of the rest of the assembled guests.

In the meantime the young heir himself, totally unconscious that the long passage leading from his nursery was filled with all the moveable furniture from the drawing and dining-rooms, that servants had for days been employed in giving a brilliant polish to the floors, that the hot-houses and poultry-courts of the neighbourhood had been robbed of their respective stores, and that milliners and dress-makers had nearly exhausted their magazines of taste and fashion, all to do honour to his nativity, the young heir himself was quietly asleep in his pink and white silk cradle, heedless of the noisy arrival and the inharmonious tuning of musical instruments.

“ Dear little brother, we must take care not to wake him,” said a little fair girl, about three years old, as she stood upon tip-toe



and bent over the sleeping infant, at the same time being particularly careful that her short white muslin frock, with broad blue sash, should not meet with any opposition to its fan-like contour.

“And we must take care not to race along the passage too quickly with Charlie Seymour or Tommy or Harry Dewar,” replied the eldest sister Eleanor, who, having reached five years of age, was considered as an oracle by little Mabel.

“Oh, here are Mamma and Aunt,” exclaimed both the children at once, as, heedless of former admonitions, they darted across the room to display their ball attire.

“I am come to take you down stairs with me; are you quite ready?” and Mrs Neville, the young mother of Linwood’s heir, looked with admiring affection upon the bright, happy faces and pretty dress of her

two little girls. Mrs Neville was the best tempered, happiest, most simple-minded, indulgent, active wife and mother in the world. She had married Mr Neville because she loved him; she had always been blessed with good health and good spirits; she had become the mother of a son and heir, just when people began to hope Linwood would not descend in the female line; she was not sentimental, or clever, her servants never caused her any annoyance, and she had not yet begun to think that a governess was necessary.

Mr Neville was an honourable man whom every one respected, and at the same time rather feared. Naturally reserved, he nevertheless made his wife the confidante of all his thoughts. He was a clever man, but, setting at nought the poetry of life, he looked upon everything with a direct down-right straight forward gaze,

as if with a glance of his keen eye he could penetrate to the weaknesses of his fellow-creatures. Kind-hearted in reality, he showed little outward sympathy, and though his advice was often sought, his presence in seasons of distress was rarely desired. But in youth, faults and foibles have all a certain elasticity which is lost in maturer years, and Mr Neville was young and prosperous.

He was perfect in the character of a host—simple and refined in his address—all pride and reserve vanished in his manner while he welcomed his guests to his profuse hospitality. He neither showed that indifference which, under colour of the most perfect refinement, makes it possible that each should feel neglected while permitted to choose his own amusement; nor that eagerness to provide entertainment, which gives to each individual an uncomfort-

able feeling of being perpetually watched and overlooked.

This evening Mr Neville was in a particularly happy mood. He liked having a son and heir; and he liked that his pretty wife should be the centre of attraction and congratulation. "Now, dear Aunt Mabel, do take my hand, and let us begin dancing," lisped her little namesake, as she saw that her sister was leaving the nursery, having forcibly drawn away her mother from the prolonged contemplation of the sleeping heir.

"Aunt Mabel looks quite serious to-night, are you not well, dear?"—exclaimed Mrs Neville hastily, as, restraining for a moment her little girl's impetuosity, she stopped at the end of the long gallery leading from the nursery, and perceived that her sister was following slowly, almost thoughtfully—"and yet you

look more beautiful than ever," she said fondly, as, having quickened her pace, Mabel Stewart had rejoined her, and was now standing in the full, yet soft light of a lamp, which displayed the perfection of her face and figure, in the bloom of one or two-and-twenty. The colour rose quickly to Mabel's cheek, as she hastily replied to Mrs Neville's observation.

"You have a keen eye to-night, Sophy, I could hardly fancy my movements and looks would be observed, when you had so much to occupy you, and interest at the same time; you know what a long, busy day we have had."

"No, no, darling, you do not look wearied; on the contrary, I have never seen you more bright, but I have observed several times to-day that you seemed anxious, abstracted. I am sure there *is* some reason for my suspicions,"

she continued earnestly, as she fixed her eyes steadily on her sister's face.

"I will not be cross-examined, Sophy," Mabel replied, endeavouring to laugh off a certain embarrassment she could not entirely conceal.—"You know it is easy to be mistaken."

"But I am not mistaken, something unusual has happened or is about to happen, I am convinced, and you are hiding the truth from me; this is not kind." Mrs Neville affectionately put her arm within her sister's, following the children, who had already found their way to the bottom of the stairs. "Tell me, have you had any news from India—has any thing revived old impressions—has Mr Maynard?" She stopped, again fixing her kind truthful eyes upon Mabel's face, from which the brilliant colour had entirely

faded, leaving it unusually pale. With intense anxiety Mrs Neville remarked that it wore also an unwonted expression of resolution, which closed the full yet finely moulded lips in a calm seriousness, and fixed a more than ordinary depth of feeling in the dark blue eyes. Mabel breathed quickly, and almost painfully, yet she did not shrink from her sister's kind, scrutinizing glance.

“Do not question me, Sophy—do not think me unkind, and make me miserable—you shall know all in time—I confess I do not feel quite well—that last year's illness has shaken my foolish nerves, I believe, a good deal.”

“Yes, but it is not that illness which now affects you—you used not to be so reserved—have I not been as a mother to you? Is there any wish of your heart that I would not see gratified?—*but one*, Mabel.”



“ Oh ! do not appeal to my feelings,” replied Mabel, gaily, while she strove to hide a tear. “ You know, I know you have been the kindest, best of sisters to me ; but—”

“ But what, dear Mabel ?—something has evidently revived old impressions—I hoped they had been quieted for ever.”

“ And so they are, or should be.” (Mabel Stewart was truth itself)—“ but do let us change this conversation, it is so perfectly unbecoming this evening. You should have nothing to annoy you to-night—all should look as bright in your heart as those little children’s faces do. They are begging us to join them !”

“ All should be forgotten, as you say, Mabel ; years have passed away, and all is changed, and you are beginning life again—it is opening once more so brilliantly before you ;” and Mrs Neville again contemplated her young sister’s



rare beauty. "You have taken unusual pains with your dress to-night, darling." She looked admiringly at the white silk and lace—whose soft folds showed off to the greatest advantage her sister's slight, graceful figure—and at the wreath of light green leaves, which, confining her wavy hair, gave a classical outline to her small, beautifully-shaped head.

"I have promised myself, at least, to forget all that is passed, and I have kept my resolution," said Mabel, rather proudly; "indeed, I am happy to think I have long ceased to have need for self-schooling. I am becoming really heartless and worldly," and she laughed half playfully, half scornfully.

"You must not become either, Mabel dear—be rational and happy—as happy as I wish you to be; only be prudent—you are not becoming a coquette, I hope," continued Mrs Neville. "You have exactly suited your dress

to the taste of your old admirer, Lord Hargrave ; that really is not fair, you should have a little compassion upon him, unless—”

“ Now, Sophy, no more torturing and lecturing, please. I have not acted the part of a coquette, I never will. Lord Hargrave knows very well that he is more than indifferent to me—but you are a dear, innocent little sister, and though you are older, and have a right to doubt my experience, I believe I know more of the world than you do. But, Sophy, there are others in the world, and others who will be here to-night too, besides Lord Hargrave.”

“ Mr Maynard—Reginald Maynard will be here to-night, I felt obliged to invite him ! but, Mabel, I implore you,” and Mrs Neville pressed her hand upon her sister’s shoulder—  
“ beware, I intreat, are you not still under my protection—will not my advice, my prayers, have weight with you ? You are deceived in

him—you are young, and I may add, for all the world allows it, that you are beautiful, but you are thoughtless, impulsive, and—”

“ Oh! come, let us see where the children have flown to, little mad things that they are, they may be in all kinds of mischief;” and Mabel hastily disengaging herself from her sister, drew her along with her into the juvenile ball-room, thus abruptly terminating the conversation.

The rooms were beginning to fill, and Mrs Neville, whispering a few words into Mabel’s ear, which had the effect of again tinging her cheek with the brightest crimson, left to her the task of arranging the little dancers, and of settling the dispute between Charlies and Harrys and Johnnies as to who should dance with Eleanor, who was the favourite of all.

“ Do be my partner, Aunt Mabel,” exclaimed her little namesake, as she clung to her dress,

“Mamma said she was sure you would dance with me, because you are always so good—now do, pray do?”

“Miss Stewart is engaged to me for the first three or four dances at least,” said a voice close beside her, in whose low accents, an unmistakeable interest, nay tenderness, was perceptible.

Mabel started—she turned round; in a moment it would have been evident to the most casual observer, that her eyes sparkled with pleasure, as she placed her hand within that of Reginald Maynard.

“Oh, Mr Maynard, please do not take Aunt Mabel away, we cannot do without her, indeed we cannot,” exclaimed three or four little voices at once, as they guessed at the sinister intention of their new rival of appropriating their favourite for a great part of the evening.

“No, no, darlings, don’t be afraid, Mr Maynard has no claim whatever upon me. I am quite your property till you are tired of me,” and giving Mr Maynard a look which had the desired effect of dismissing him to be little Mabel’s *vis-à-vis*, she desired the musicians to play a merry country dance. The whole room was soon in motion, dance followed dance, there was no weariness or languor amongst Mabel’s little favourites, till at length, seizing a convenient opportunity when Mrs Neville and a party of her friends entered the small ball-room, Mabel, avoiding her sister’s searching glance, took Mr Maynard’s arm and left the scene of unchecked youthful merriment.

For one instant they sought to pass through the busy moving throng that crowded the principal entrance into the grand saloon, while Mabel replied to the numerous salutations that greeted her first appearance; but in a few

minutes she had yielded to her companion's entreaties that she would not mingle with the dancers, but grant him an anxiously desired tête-a-tête.

The room was filled, a beautiful waltz had put every one in motion, so that to pass through the saloon was almost impossible, "Let me lead you along this suite of rooms; at the end is a conservatory, is there not?" Maynard whispered as he perceived Miss Stewart's evident disinclination to encounter the moving crowd.

"No, let us stay here for a few moments—they all look so bright and happy—I will sit here;" and motioning to her companion to bring a chair, she was soon seated, half concealed by a tapestried 'portière' which hung over the entrance to the ball-room.

It was indeed a brilliant sight, as Mabel had said. All that wealth, taste, fashion, and



beauty could contribute was there. Innumerable wax candles burning in crystal chandeliers were reflected in costly mirrors, and threw a soft clear light around. Flowers, vases, statues, marble pillars, contrasted in their repose with the animated life which was brought to view under a variety of aspects ; countenance, manner, costume, were all more or less apparently in harmony with the scene. Yet a close observer would have been able to draw many an inference contradictory to that which would naturally arise at first sight of the gay *tout ensemble* to the uninitiated mind. Bright eyes, sparkling with unwonted lustre at the approach of the favoured individual they had anxiously sought, would become downcast and dim, as, a few words pronounced of careless and unmeaning compliment--the aristocratic flatterer, the fashionable devotee would saunter leisurely away in search of his own particular star. Coquetry

was there with her thousand lures, and prudery with her forced reserve; there was also heard the listless wearied laugh, proving that the heart was far away from the present scene, or that the power it might possess to interest, had not yet been successfully exerted.

There was also vanity lessening the charm which unaffected beauty must throw around, and pride, the pride of birth, gleaming in the haughty eye, the majestic brow, scorning the pressure of the humbler many moving around. There was also the deep and tender tone answering the appeal so often made in vain, but which when it falls on willing ears, has such strange unutterable power to charm, to make each note of music vibrate on the heart with magic sweetness, to dissolve all surrounding objects, to annihilate all time, all space!

Alas! that such scenes should also too often



give rise to the disappointed, unquiet glance cast upon a fortunate and distinguished rival, that the step of weariness and languor should, amidst them, too often contrast with the elastic movement of innocent, undisguised pleasure !

Quick thoughts, connected with the scene before her, passed through Mabel's mind, as she sat by the tapestried portière, for to her the secret history of many who styled themselves either friends or acquaintances was known. She was half-hidden by the deep folds of the curtain, but she knew that Reginald Maynard was beside her, watching her slightest movement.

“ Mabel ! Miss Stewart,” he whispered gently, as he thought how far she surpassed all, in that assembly of the young and beautiful. “ Mabel ! the dance is nearly ended, the crowd will soon be very great—it will be annoying to

you ! Not one step should approach too near you, not one single fold of your dress should be displaced ! Will you not, now that you have gratified curiosity, or the feeling, whatever it be that actuates you—will you not grant my request ?”

“ No, no, be patient—I am so amused, and interested, thoughts so strange are passing through my mind ; they are unusual visitors to me in a scene like this,” she replied, with that consciousness of power she possessed, to make her slightest wish a law to Reginald Maynard !

“ You have been, in general, more than a spectator, and I ! how can I account for, or sufficiently value my good fortune—you are not trifling with me ? Mabel !”

“ Hush !” and a glance, turned reproachfully upon him, spoke of a spirit which hitherto, at least, had not learnt to bend before the will

of another, though there might be pleasure in unrestrained submission.

Maynard was silent; he felt a secret delight in bowing to Mabel's influence. He was madly in love with her! For the moment the one word she had uttered laid all his fears to rest. He remained beside her—the music stopped—soon Mabel was the centre of a gathering crowd, who pressed around her, some with sincere expressions of delight at seeing her, others of surprise at her not having joined in the last beautiful waltz; while a few, and they were amongst the most devoted of her admirers, lingered near her, hoping to engage a few moments of her attention. Amongst the foremost was Lord Hargrave, a man renowned in the fashionable world for handsome exterior and most fascinating manners, but who, having somewhat passed the prime of life, was not over-pleased to be rallied upon the evidently

unsuccessful devotion which he bestowed upon the beautiful Mabel. Piqued by her coldness, and what he termed her caprice, and unaccustomed to contradiction, Lord Hargrave measured, with one glance of his haughty eye, the comparative merits of the man he was compelled to feel was his rival, for Reginald Maynard, notwithstanding the increasing crowd, still kept his position of guardian over Mabel. Returning Maynard's salutation with a stiff aristocratic bow, Lord Hargrave would willingly have persuaded himself that he was an object of perfect indifference to him—they moved in such different spheres! But Maynard's quiet self-possession, aided by a consciousness of owning attractions to which few women are blind, when they are objects of preference, made Lord Hargrave's assumed indifference sit less easily upon him than was desirable.

“ I am glad Miss Stewart has not permitted

us poor mortals to be under a total eclipse during the whole of the evening," he said, endeavouring to throw into his manner as much chivalrous devotion as possible.

"Are you really eclipsed?" she replied with a short, merry laugh, as she looked up with an expression of coquetry, and highly pleased at Lord Hargrave's evident annoyance. "I should hardly have thought you would allow any light to be sufficiently brilliant to produce such an effect."

"I am aware that you are privileged to make us feel our own deficiencies, and that we look in vain for redress, when you are pleased to be either beautifully capricious, or painfully satirical," and Lord Hargrave cast a glance half mortified, half playful upon Mabel, "but will you at least give me credit for truth, when I hope to shine by reflected rays. You will be my partner for the next waltz?"

At these words Maynard advanced a few steps, but he understood too well the nature of the ground on which his dearly prized privileges were based to make any further attempt to come to Miss Stewart's assistance.

"I do not intend to dance to-night," she replied, "or, at least, not until some wonderfully inspiring music acts as a spell upon my present indolence." "Mr Clinton," she continued, addressing a tall, fair-haired young man who had just joined her, after very properly returning his last partner to her chaperone, "can you interpret the enigmas of physiognomy? I ask you, as I believe you have a diplomatic career in prospect."

Mr Clinton blushed—"I should say that smiles and frowns are the mind's messengers, to give notice and warning to all whom they may concern."



“That is not telling us too much; I think I may venture to foretel that you will some day gain a medal for diplomatic proficiency,” exclaimed Mabel, laughing. “Never answer satisfactorily a straightforward question, you will find this an invaluable rule.”

“I am happy to see you are in such a sportive mood,” exclaimed Lord Hargrave peevishly, having a slight idea that he was the concealed object of Miss Stewart’s mirth; “one cannot always command the expression of pleasure and annoyance, until one has learnt to mask all feeling—some look provokingly self-satisfied, and certain of success in all undertakings.”—He did not glance towards Maynard, but all who composed the small coterie were tolerably correct as to the drift of the last remark.

“Our powers of observation are not so totally at fault as might be imagined,” returned Mabel with mischievous glee.



“Very likely not—you have only to look straightforward. Mr Maynard, I should fancy, is gifted with rare discrimination—would not a mistake be unpardonable in him?”

“You have propounded a question without levelling the difficulty of replying to it, Lord Hargrave. Oblique vision is by no means an uncommon defect, so many see just what they please, and overlook what displeases them.”

“Perhaps there may be a charm, a temporary one, at least, in self-deception.”

“Do you think so! I find it lamentable to mourn over one’s own deficiency of understanding or of observation.”

“Are you really alluding to yourself, or do Mr Clinton or myself stand beneath your censure? I should esteem myself fortunate even to be the object of Miss Stewart’s animadversions.”

“Anything but indifference,” said Mr Clinton

smiling, and inwardly rather pitying Lord Hargrave's position, for at a glance he understood the exact amount of interest Miss Stewart felt for him.

"I am not judging or censuring myself or you or any one," Mabel replied, somewhat anxious to put an end to the conversation. "You must forgive me if I have said anything very distressingly strange or rude. I believe I have indulged my own little taste for mischief, and I feel all the better for it, but now I shall wish you all good-bye—but first, Mr Maynard, would you oblige me by making a slight tour of inspection in the direction of the juvenile ball-room, I feel sadly remiss in my duties this evening."

In a moment her injunction was obeyed, and her messenger was again by her side, being able to make a good report as to the seeming harmony existing amongst Mabel's self-constituted young charges.

“Mr Maynard is highly honoured, and doubtless fully appreciates the confidence reposed in him,” said Lord Hargrave, for the first time partially addressing the individual he wished he could despise — “Miss Stewart is aware her wishes are commands.”

“Have they not a right to be so,” exclaimed Mabel; “surely we fragile beings may look for assistance.”

“Yes, but all have not an equal right to bestow it,” and Lord Hargrave glanced half angrily at Maynard.

“I am glad no one questions my right to make any sort of request,” and Mabel laughed aloud, as the mischievous disposition she did not strive to hide, became more and more gratified at Lord Hargrave’s increased irritability. “I am glad I feel privileged to do exactly as I please, and am not responsible to any one for my dear little caprices.”

“I think all are responsible—pardon me, Miss Stewart, I think you are particularly so.”

“Indeed!” at length coolly interposed Maynard. “Miss Stewart makes no promises, she neither asks for nor expects admonitions.”

“Pray forgive me, Miss Stewart,” and for a moment Lord Hargrave himself stood abashed, not before his rival, but before the frown which had gathered on Mabel’s beautiful brow. “If I have been hasty”—

“Well, well, we will not quite banish you our presence,” Mabel, restored to perfect good humour, laughingly replied; “but Mr Maynard, I am tired of being hid behind this portière, do let us emerge into light, you yourself have run a great chance of being eclipsed,” and making a profound curtesy to Lord Hargrave, she took Reginald’s arm and

moved towards the ball-room. It was comparatively empty; small groups were scattered here and there, some, in earnest conversation, were standing against a row of marble pillars; the musicians were tuning their instruments. "Let us hasten onwards, Mabel, dear Mabel, we shall be interrupted." Maynard spoke low and earnestly. Lord Hargrave watched them from a distance; what angry disappointed feelings rose in his heart!

At this moment Mrs Neville approached; her countenance wore an air of seriousness, almost of severity, as she passed slowly by, and would have detained her sister, begging her to accompany her into the adjoining room where some friends were waiting to be introduced to her.

"Another time, dear Sophy, this evening you know is to be devoted to pleasure; I believe I have an unusual horror of formal introductions, do make my excuses for the present," and

gaily kissing her hand to her sister, she sauntered on laughing and talking, but at heart ill at ease. They reached the conservatory. It was dimly lighted, as if in compassion to the frail beauty of the various sweet scented flowers within, which opened only to the night air, delicately perfuming it.

"At length we are alone," exclaimed Maynard, as he led his companion to a seat, "I have longed for this moment, I have been suffering tortures."

"So patiently?"

"Yes, for your sake." He gazed full upon her face as the light fell upon it and lit it up with marvellous beauty. "This night, this very night, Mabel, remember your promise!"

The gaiety she had assumed had disappeared, and she leant her head dejectedly upon her hand, as she turned her face away from the gaze which she felt was fastened upon her. "I repeat, I

have my misgivings, why should I trust my destiny to you?"

"Because I love you! because I will spend my whole life in your service."

"You are fickle like the rest of your race," she exclaimed scornfully, "and yet! dare I trust you, Reginald; once I have been deceived."

"Only trust me! only be mine for ever." The fire that was burning in his heart, seemed kindling in his dark grey eyes, as he bent them upon Mabel.

"You do not seek my wealth?"—she smiled as if she took pleasure in torturing him; she was not in earnest.

"Your wealth,—no, no, you are rich and I am poor, but *you* do not heed those who therefore scorn and look coldly upon me, who would have you matched with the



great and the prosperous. Oh, Mabel, you know I love you !”

“ Be it so, only be calm ; why do you not openly press your suit ?”

“ I dare not. I have endured, I still endure, indignities, and for your sake willingly. But time presses. I must now or never follow in my uncle’s suite, you are the arbiter of my destiny. Oh, say you will be my bride.”

She did not start ! she did not withdraw her hand, she lent upon his shoulder, his lips were on her brow !

“ Your bride ! so soon, so sudden !”

“ Not sudden, have I not looked forward to this very hour ; have you not permitted me to do so ? We shall be watched, circumvented, our only safety is in this sudden act.”

“ But I want resolution, even I ! to leave

my home, where I have only known kindness, to disappoint all my sister's hopes! Oh! Reginald, leave me; do not tempt me to take this step." Her better nature seemed to gain mastery over the wilful spirit. For a moment Reginald's heart sunk within him!

"And yet resolution has rarely failed you! I suppose you are still under control, the control of Herbert Dalrymple," he said bitterly. "You have no will, no self-dependence."

He had touched the right cord. For one moment all youthful timidity and reserve vanished, as Mabel raised her beautiful head, and looked steadily at her lover.

"I have both; my resolution shall not fail. I have mourned sufficiently in secret, and now I will have my triumph. There lies the strength of your conquest, Reginald, you have heard truth from my lips. The world

will say, that the step I shall take was prompted by a spirit rebelling against being thwarted and controlled like a petted child; the world will say that I chose to act for myself instead of being compelled to marry for rank and position; you know me better, are you content?"

"I know you have suffered; you have loved once, can you never love again?"

His happiness in life seemed to hang upon her answer.

"When you are gone, I am weary till you return," she replied quietly, pitying for the moment his undisguised anxiety. "I love your sympathy, your kind looks; your words sink deep here, I am grateful for them,"—she pressed her hand upon her heart—"but I have loved as I never shall love again. Why should I, when a few months only, and all was changed? First cold, short

letters, showed all was not right; then they became less and less frequent—but you know all; you have been a sharer, a consoler in this grief!”

“It is still too keen,” muttered Reginald. “I had hoped time had assisted my devotion in obliterating the past”—a fiend-like expression for a moment passed over his countenance—“Mabel, you have promised to be mine! beware of the consequences if you still treasure up the memory of another!”

“Do not fear, I have loved almost enough to hate—I am free—he did not know me—he did not know my strength of will and purpose. Yes, Reginald, I am yours!”

“You promise, my own Mabel!”

“To promise! never to be able to retract! What am I saying? Dare I thus outrage all seeming propriety, by this hasty union!”

He bent over her imploringly — “Upon

this hasty union depend all my hopes, all hopes of possessing you, Mabel. Let days, weeks pass, still will the same obstacles exist—I shall not be richer or greater, you will be no less the heiress, the loved one that you are! shall I then leave you now, for ever?” he continued, as he observed her hesitation.”

“Stay, Reginald! forgive and pity me! I have tortured and tormented you, yet you are proof against my wilfulness, my coldness. I repent when you are far from me, and I long for the time when we shall meet again,”—continued the young girl, with whose wild impulses was mingled a strange simplicity of thought and expression.

“Then, why condemn me, why condemn yourself to a parting which must be for months and years, perhaps for ever?”

“Do not look so earnestly upon me, or you leave me no choice,” she replied, as she hastily

turned away from his impassioned gaze ; “ let us use caution, calmness, consideration.”

“ Can you speak so coldly—I can but consider my love for you.”

“ And so said Herbert Dalrymple ! but what followed ? Unfulfilled promises—the agony of disappointment ! Can I trust again ! You know I am not speaking vainly, lightly, yet even with your penetration you cannot know what I have felt—it was not read by the one being who has painfully instructed me.” For the moment the present seemed all forgotten—the past came back so vividly to her memory.

“ You did not deserve his desertion,” said Maynard calmly.

“ And I have a right to condemn him,” she replied quickly.

“ Yes ! but do not judge all for one, and oh ! Mabel, do not judge too harshly ; we are weak, erring mortals, swayed by uncontrollable im-

pulses," an unusual expression passed hastily over Maynard's features—"Is there no allowance to be made for human infirmity?—pity, but do not blame!"

"I neither blame nor pity. I do but despise!" The colour rose in her cheek; "and yet I think you are a weak advocate—you are right not to urge any vain plea in your friend's favour," she added scornfully—"I believe Herbert would have moved heaven and earth to prove you guiltless had circumstances been equally favourable!"

"Mabel! why do you speak so strangely! It is not the past, which you must forget, that I would recall, it is the hopeful future I would advocate. Time, distance, everything separates you from one who you confess has proved unworthy. Have you resolved to mourn for him, to wither like a faded flower in your youth's beauty? Will you be a model of



female constancy?" he added in low quick accents.

"Hush," replied his companion, hastily, as if to lull the echo of his last words, which mocked while they added fuel to the proud spirit, which ruled despotically. "On the head of Herbert Dalrymple shall rest the consequences of the step to which you urge me. I do not say that you have enslaved my heart, as he has done, once and for ever, but I do feel that in you I own a superior, at least, a superior will. The vain, flattering world I despise. I soar above its votaries, its lords and gentlemen of high degree, who seek the highly endowed Mabel Stewart, who offer a title, who accept a dower, and who crouch in abject submission to my beauty and my uncontrolled will. Because you are, I think, above such meanness, I will be, I am, your's."

A smile of triumphant extacy replaced the

look of anxiety with which Maynard had listened to Mabel's last words, but ere he could reply she continued, "and yet I torture myself with the idea that you love me now because I am young, and the world says beautiful, because the outward indifference I show you spurs on your devotion towards me. I think that the time may come when, having conquered, you will despise and neglect—will this ever be, Reginald?"

"It must never be, Mabel! Oh, Mabel! can you thus deceive me?" It was her sister's voice. Pale as marble, resting against the open door of the conservatory, and sorrow more than anger expressed in her countenance, as the straggling rays of light fell upon her, was Mrs Neville. A few steps in arrear was seen the retreating figure of Lord Hargrave.

"Am I watched, insulted!" exclaimed Mabel indignantly, as she advanced towards

her sister, while her face crimsoned with emotion. "This I cannot pardon, even from you, Sophy. I understand it all—you have been made the tool of Lord Hargrave's jealous love. He has led you here, but I will not be foiled."

"Mabel, this may appear an unwelcome intrusion to you, and still more to you, Sir," said Mrs Neville, with an unwonted severity in her tone, as she addressed Maynard; "accident, not intention, has made me a witness to words which I would willingly forget—oh, Mabel, are you so wilfully blind?"

"At that moment Reginald advanced, his tall figure and finely-moulded features standing out in relief against the light within the conservatory, while his expressive countenance was bent upon Mabel in an agony of love and fear. "I have but one wish on earth, it is Miss Stewart's happiness," he exclaimed, appealing to Mrs

Neville's feelings rather than to her 'sense of rectitude, "if she permits me to hope."

"Mabel, Miss Stewart, is certainly of age, but she is under mine and my husband's protection. In such an important affair as that choice which is to decide her happiness or misery for life, it would be wise not to consult alone her biassed inclination, or perhaps a romantic affection; but this is no time for arguing, nor need I say that, under present circumstances, this is no subject for arguing."

"Stay, Sophy," exclaimed Mabel, her strong and indignant feelings having hitherto made her keep silence. "I am under no one's control, not even your's, dear as you are to me; no preference but my own shall actuate the all-important choice I have to make. I have too strong feelings—once they have been trampled upon; Lord Hargrave is odious to me—the more he would shower upon me evidence of his

jealous interest, the more I feel the distance increases between us. Sophy, I have promised to be Reginald's wife, he shall stand out boldly before the world. The man Lord Hargrave despises and would injure shall be his successful rival."

"Hush, Mabel—I beg, I pray you, say no more." Mrs Neville gently took hold of her sister's hand, and would have led her away. "You are exciting curiosity by this long absence from the ball-room, so many are inquiring for you; now do pray come, dear Mabel."

Mrs Neville had an undefined aversion for every combination of circumstances, out of which could be extracted anything like a scene, and which her unsophisticated mind connected with some mysterious evil, past, present, or future,—her even and unimaginative temperament, enabling her always to hold a straight

course amidst the perils which necessarily assailed one, of so impulsive and sensitive a turn as her sister. She had always disliked Maynard, having a secret misgiving that he had supplanted in Mabel's affections one or all of her many eligible devotees. While she could not define all her objections to him, she considered his want of fortune as an insuperable obstacle, and was in the habit of regarding him likewise with as much fear as aversion. The good sense which is often denied to talent and quickness guides the clear vision of those less gifted. Mrs Neville thought she discovered in Maynard qualities unsuited to contribute to a wife's happiness. She inwardly rejoiced at the present moment, that all immediate evil would be avoided by his being called upon to accompany his uncle abroad in an official capacity; and at the same time sincerely hoped that neither of her own daughters would grow up so hand-

some, and so troublesome, as her beautiful sister.

“ We shall meet again,” said Mabel, as she waved an adieu to Maynard, and followed Mrs Neville with flushed cheek and haughty step. She was soon lost to sight in the gay crowd.

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The dawn was beginning to break, the dawn of a soft summer morn. All sounds had ceased within the festive walls of Linwood. The thrush and blackbird were tuning their musical song of love and praise, the faint rosy streaks in the horizon foretold the approach of the great orb of day. All was solemn and silent around ; light vapours rising from many a green meadow showed the course of a wandering stream ; and, lulled to security by the early stillness, a timid hare was marking the dew with his hasty footsteps, while he cropped the soft green



grass. The gray spire of a small church, surrounded by many a venerable yew-tree, rose in the distance. The tombs that were enclosed within the sacred precincts could have told a tale of many a young heart sunk to rest, of toil and sorrow, and worn-out ambition, of kindliness and humble content, of faith, of hope; but within those walls there were life, and love, flushed cheeks, and hasty steps, solemn words and irrevocable vows.

Mabel Stewart was standing in all her girlish, graceful beauty by the side of Reginald Maynard. She was promising to be his wife, she was casting off all former ties, vowing to him, and him alone, henceforth, love, duty, obedience. And he, in the extacy of a joy he could scarcely comprehend, had encircled her finger with the golden ring which made them one, which bound her to him till death should part them, to cherish, protect, and love her,

beautiful, passionate, faulty, yet beloved as she was. There, with a bridal veil only in addition to the dress she wore on this birthday-night, which her sister had so fondly admired, there she stood, with none of the prestige of wealth about her, all but unattended, and unsupported, for her own maid, who had been with her from a child, acted as her only bridesmaid, and two of Reginald's own friends were all the attendants, in an official capacity, at the hasty ceremony.

The clerk had been bribed to give up the keys of the church, and the special license had been beforehand secured at the usual costly price.

But now the first rays of morning stream in through the small pointed windows. The solemn service is performed, Mabel for the last time signs her maiden name. She is Reginald's own beautiful bride. There is no

time for consideration, the deed is irrevocable, so quickly accomplished, so lasting in its consequences. The carriage is waiting at the church gate, the door closes upon them.

The future was but carelessly anticipated by the newly-married pair.

## CHAPTER II.

LIFE is a series of surprises—we do not guess to day the mood, the pleasure, the power of to-morrow, when we are building up our being . . . . No truth so sublime, but it may be trivial to-morrow in the light of new thoughts.—EMERSON.

FIVE years passed. Time, which heals or soothes all sorrow, takes the sting from all disappointment, and, in general, gives a true colouring to actions which prejudice may misrepresent, brings also retribution if not vengeance in its passage.

The high, independent spirit of Mabel Stewart, believing itself aggrieved, prompted her to follow passion's dictates in the choice of Reginald Maynard. Mabel had taken an irremediable

step, from which there would be no receding, should submission, unsweetened by esteem and affection, prove irksome in after years. How bitterly Mrs Neville reproached herself and her erring sister ; how, in the peculiar confidence of her nature, she sought the sympathy of every friend and neighbour when Mabel's flight was first discovered, can easily be imagined by those who chance to number among their acquaintance any one so short-sighted and simple-minded as Mrs Neville. It is also easy to imagine how envy, malice, and penetration exerted their peculiar powers, reprobating unsparingly the evil-doers, and prophesying the unavoidable consequences of the step they had taken.

In truth, had Mabel secured her happiness, when, owing to a bitter disappointment in first love, she trusted it to Reginald Maynard, known only as a fascinating adventurer, the small

country world, in the neighbourhood of Linwood, would have been grievously surprised. There was every thing to be said to the prejudice of Mabel Stewart. She had outraged all the dictates of common-sense which are generally addressed in particular to those who have no sympathies with the highly-gifted, the poetical, the daring, or the deep-feeling. She had taken by surprise all the straightforward, commonplace, talkative, gossiping world, and such a reproof to individual penetration and collective observation could not be forgiven. Then, she had married a man who, without any pretension to wealth or pedigree, had, by good looks and intense devotion alone, won the prize which the excellent, uninteresting eldest son, or the fast, good-looking, indigent younger brother had coveted in vain. Lastly, "Mabel was a flirt; she always had been a flirt, and flirts do not make good, happy, obedient, quiet wives," said

many a mother of plain, disagreeable-looking daughters, while taking the opportunity of administering a lesson and a warning which were neither necessary nor palatable.

Those who would have been most ready to follow the example of the beautiful young bride were most loud in the expression of horror and indignation at the step she had taken, while they professed themselves in no degree astonished at Mr Maynard's audacity, "having, upon several occasions, taken pains to avoid his acquaintance through an innate dislike to his style and manner."

Poor Mabel! None spoke very kindly of her, for to great personal beauty was joined an extreme disregard for the opinion of the world, which that great despot resents with unsparing severity. She was too independent, too true, too loving, too full of great faults and fine virtues—too constant to forget, too



proud to mourn. She could not forgive, but she could be revenged—and she was revenged—but with a revenge that recoiled upon herself also. She was careless of the future—the ideal counterfeited the real—as she confessed, she bowed to Maynard's superior will. She tolerated him, while she knew he was her slave. Ah! Pride! that bane of human nature, that nurturer of untold evil, crime, and misery. Pride was Mabel's task-master! It should not be said that she was constant to the memory of one who had scarcely bid her adieu, before he had forgotten all promises and vows! No! far away as she was, her name should reach him coupled with another's. He might picture her to himself as the bride of the handsome Reginald Maynard, and then he might do justice to the sternness of a wounded, disappointed heart. She should have her triumph through his humiliation. It was

but a short-lived triumph. The right-judging, censorious world was not disappointed.

A few years passed, and none envied, few even remembered or spoke of, Mabel Maynard ; only one heart still yearned towards her with an affection that knew no change. She would have been more than revenged for supposed or real injury, for real or fancied desertion, had she read the feelings with which the first announcement of her marriage was received by Herbert Dalrymple. She would even have trembled at the sight of the scorn and indignation which quivered on his lip and blanched his cheek. She would have wept agonising tears, could she have discerned the anguish of his heart. She would never have forgiven herself for being the first to implant there the thorns of mistrust, whose roots extended deeper and deeper, causing Dalrymple to become a misanthrope, while all women

were destined to pass henceforth beneath his scornful censure. Why had she been so hasty, so passionate and mistaken? Ah! she only listened to the tale, the suspicion of jealous affection prompted her to believe; she fancied she was not without confirmation of Dalrymple's inconstancy—Maynard's own lips had assured her his affection was no longer hers.

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None envied Mabel Maynard, when the reports which were soon circulated respecting her hasty marriage, were no longer doubtful. Reginald had loved the beautiful heiress, with all the impetuosity of a nature spurred on to passionate devotion by the difficulties of attaining a desired end, but his was not that love which is so well grounded that it sets at defiance all changes and all circumstances.

Mabel was capricious—Maynard unprincipled. Her change of position in life soon became

distasteful to her. The sacrifices she was required to make, were not demanded of her by one commanding her respect, and whose example prompted to imitation. She grew discontented, he became imperious, she impotently questioned his right to the fortune her blind self-will had bestowed upon him. Retaliation followed censure, an embittered spirit disturbed conjugal harmony, and Reginald and Mabel became the hero and heroine of the oft-told tale, of an ill-assorted marriage.

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It was the close of a long summer's day, which had been enjoyed to the uttermost by the inhabitants of the busy city of Marseilles—individuals of every nation, Asiatic, European,—every variety of costume might be seen on the broad quay awaiting ostensibly the arrival of the Genoese packet, but in reality luxuriating for the most part in that dozing,

smoking, talking, happy indolence, which nowhere betrays itself so advantageously as at a sea-port town in the sunny south.

There were men of business to be seen walking hastily by, as if each lost moment were a golden guinea subtracted from their yearly income; there were speculators of haggard, uncertain mien and impulsive gait, who had staked their last hundred; there was the gaily-clothed man of fashion, the bright-eyed pleasure-seeker, the earnest, unsubstantial-looking artist, glorying in the feast of beauty and variety; young beauty and faded ugliness, all contributed to the gay, picturesque, moving scene.

Existence alone seemed to some, sufficient enjoyment, particularly to those who were the least educated or the most thoughtless, as they sat and gazed upon the sunset, and the thin, fleeting, gold clouds, and the blue

Mediterranean, which was visible at intervals amongst the masts and cordage and many-coloured flags of the vessels in port.

Amongst the crowd was one, who, not remarkable in appearance, had, by the unusual anxiety visible in his manner, attracted the attention of the passers by, and of the groups of idle sailors as they sat crossed-legged upon broken barrels and half-buried boats. The individual in question was an Englishman, about sixty years of age, evidently belonging to that thriving middle class whose successful aim through life having been to make money is often at a loss how to spend it.

Mr Jarvis's early habits of frugality were at variance with the possession of a splendid abode, purchased late in life from a ruined aristocrat, but which he intended should be the means of procuring influence and a name to his descendants. But he had no descendant



—no wife—no child laid claim to his gilded halls, elaborately fitted with carvings, and hung with costly pictures. Many a cousin of first, second, and even third degree, fawned upon the wealthy retired trader, praising his gaudy decorations, yet gazing unappreciatingly upon his ‘Titians’ and his ‘Canovas.’ But Geoffrey Jarvis despised them all—he had long made up his own mind as to the eventual disposal of his property. He was a man of discernment, and knew the value of his loving relatives’ attentions. At Marseilles the greater part of his successful career had been passed, and now as he stands, and walks, and hurries by, ever and anon fixing the focus of his small pocket-telescope which brings the distant horizon beneath the cognizance of his keen grey eye, he feels that the turning-point of his happiness in latter years is at hand. Not one of those who gaze, and laugh, and wonder at the retired unsocial habits



of the well-known English Cræsus, would have dared to make one mocking comment upon the behaviour of this man of strict honesty, whom fortune had so highly favoured, yet many an eye was upon him as he shook his head, unbuttoned the light-brown holland overcoat, which encircled his somewhat portly figure, and from the recesses of his waistcoat-pocket drew forth for the seventh or eighth time in the course of an hour a small envelope, addressed in a female hand. For the moment he seemed lost in the contemplation of the few lines it contained, then would start up and again scan the horizon with searching glance.

In due course of time the expected packet was in sight, and as it neared the harbour, Mr Jarvis made his way with the crowd, until at length he stood, with a multitude of his fellow-expectants, on its busy thronged decks. He evidently had one determined object in view,

as he neither heeded the obstacles he encountered, in the shape of officious porters and conveyance drivers, nor turned aside one glance towards the bright-eyed, dark-complexioned, gaily-clothed women, who had either fruit or curiosities to sell, a husband, lover, or brother to welcome, or a fortune to disclose.

Geoffrey Jarvis pushed on his straightforward course, and in a short time might have been seen among the last lingerers on deck. Few would have guessed what affinity there could be between him—honest and open-hearted though his countenance betokened him to be—and a young elegant high-born looking woman, who hung upon his arm, and seemed to look to him for protection and advice. An attendant and a little girl, five years old, composed the remainder of the small party, who, placing themselves under Mr Jarvis's escort, were lost to the sight of the wondering bystanders, as

they drove through the principal streets, and stopped before the door of a splendid mansion, which owned Mr Jarvis as master.

Now, none could have envied Mabel Maynard, could they have divined the destiny which, for the moment, had ordained that she should seek a home under Jarvis's roof. Few but would even have pitied her amongst her former acquaintances could they have witnessed the change that a few years had effected—not that her beauty had totally deserted her, but sorrow and suffering, and angry passions, and disappointed expectations, had written their individual tale upon her nobly formed brow, and impressed themselves but too legibly on each feature. Her step, indeed, was more haughty than formerly, but her figure had lost its once majestic and beautiful proportions, and the roundness and bright colouring of youth

had departed, leaving her worn and aged in appearance far beyond her years. But, at times, and especially when Mabel gazed upon her child, her usually compressed lips would open with an indescribably beautiful smile, brightening at the same moment the melancholy of her dark blue eyes.

In her child were centred all her affections. The little Rosa was the idol of her heart, the one object to which she clung in life. She was a bright, dimpled, rosy child, with large eyes, like her mother's, and soft winning ways, speaking a mixture of French, Italian, and English, which evidently delighted Mr Jarvis. Rosa was a useful link, as he indeed found, to join the detached and rather formal sentences of the conversation which took place between him and his intended guest; and it was not until he had introduced Mrs Maynard to

the apartments he had fitted up for her, that the awkwardness he experienced, gave way before his warm hospitable feelings.

“ You have acted a kind, friendly part by me,” were the first words Mabel spoke. She had hitherto scarcely replied by more than monosyllables to Mr Jarvis’s inquiries,—“ You see I have availed myself of your friendship in the moment of need.”

“ I wish indeed to prove a friend,” he replied quietly.

There was in his manner to Mrs Maynard a respect, and even deference, which proved him to be not only keenly alive to the worldly distinction between them, but also incapable of taking advantage of the peculiar position in which she was placed by poverty and misfortune. The kind-hearted are naturally refined.

“ Hitherto you have only, I believe, guessed

at my history," she continued, making an effort to appear calmer, as she motioned to Mr Jarvis to seat himself beside her, "but you must know all. I have struggled to the utmost, as you may imagine, with severe trials; ruin which would only have involved myself I could have borne, but for my child's sake, I have taken this step."

"And I bless you for it, and you shall not repent it, Mrs Maynard, you have made me so happy! I shall have an interest in my old age, at last all my wealth shall not have been accumulated for nothing."

"I show my esteem, my confidence in you," continued Mrs Maynard as she looked fixedly on Jarvis's honest, open countenance.

"And I am only thankful to have it in my power to diminish my debt of gratitude to you, besides your child, your beautiful Rosa," he hesitated.

"I cannot resign control over her, you would not ask it, you would not even wish it," she replied quickly, while her pale face crimsoned. "I have taken this step which to the world would seem strange, but I am dead to the world, I am an alien from all I have loved—my husband."

"I know all—I know all," replied Jarvis hastily, for he wished to spare her the pain of explanation, "I have never ceased watching over you, if not visibly, at least through the medium of others. I have never lost sight of you since you acted the part of a ministering angel to me. How can I forget that it was your hand which raised me from a bed of sickness?"

"I performed a mere act of charity."

"And I am but grateful. Removed as we are, Madame, by birth and position in life, (for I need not be told that wealth



alone can never raise me to your level,) I have yet a heart to know, and value you as you should be valued. The time will never come when I shall consider my debt fully discharged, but—you do entrust your child to my care?”

“You are a noble-minded man! but let that suffice, you do not desire flattery. I am left in the wide world alone, to act for myself. I will not refer to the painful past, to that last event in my life which has caused me to seek the protection you so generously offer for my child; mark me, Mr Jarvis, for my child alone, for myself I shall be independent.”

“You shall never repent the step you have taken.”

“My pride revolted from any other course. I would not make any appeal to my own relations, but for my Rosa! I could not see

her brought up in penury! nevertheless, I must impose conditions."

"Name them, Madame."

"She must never be taught the history of her life; she must be received in your family as a legacy bequeathed to you by the dead, her father's, her mother's name must never be mentioned."

"But, why these restrictions?"

"I would have it so," returned Mabel, while the proud decision, which in early life, combined with her natural waywardness, again marked her manner.

"Then I am content to obey you, Madame. I have no link between myself and future generations, as I have said your child shall inherit my wealth."

"There must not be concealment between us, Mr Jarvis. Misfortune has fallen heavily upon me. I will not trace it to its source,

my conscience might too severely accuse me. The pittance I had left, when I found myself a deserted wife, would scarcely have preserved me from starvation. In my extremity I remembered your gratitude for the services I had been fortunate enough to have it in my power to bestow; I also remembered your anxiety to find some protégée who would stand you in the stead of daughter; I respect you, I have confidence in you, but my child must be under my own eye, I must watch over her, instruct, cherish her still as my own; one day she will perhaps learn to bless me for the sacrifice I shall have made. You see, Mr Jarvis," she continued with a melancholy smile, "I am not wholly above sordid, worldly considerations."

"Our obligations will be mutual, Madame. I am blessed with wealth which you need, but I have no child, you have no home, I have

made my own fortune, I am not called upon to account to any man living for my possessions," and here Mr Jarvis looked round his gaily, and somewhat gaudily-furnished room, with the pride to which honest, successful industry had given birth. "All is my own, my own hands have laboured for it. Your daughter shall inherit great part of my wealth. She will be a great heiress, she shall make a splendid marriage, she shall—"

"Hush!" exclaimed Mrs Maynard, as she waived her hand with that air of dignity which had always impressed Jarvis with a feeling of awe and admiration. "Do not let us look so far into futurity; I have considered all things—the step I have taken is dictated by an affection, which is proof against all selfish longings! For Rosa's good in years to come, I stifle many a rebellious feeling. She will be the child of luxury instead of want. For

myself individually I accept nothing," she continued, as she guessed the thoughts that were passing through Mr Jarvis's mind, "I shall provide for myself. I can teach; I shall give instruction in music, drawing, Rosa shall be my pupil, I shall still be happy." The tear glistened in her eye. Mr Jarvis's kind heart was pained, he knew Mrs Maynard's innate pride. He dreaded nothing so much as her displeasure, which he felt he should incur, if in any way he thwarted her designs. He would willingly have placed hundreds at her disposal, but his good sense told him that altered as she was in position, and overwhelmed with misfortune, a life of idleness, leaving room for the constant recurrence of painful thought, would be distasteful in the extreme. He partly guessed, but had never fully known, the particulars of her early history. A residence for two years at Florence, under

the same roof with Mr and Mrs Maynard, had occasioned his first acquaintance with them. Pity replaced the censure which he had originally passed on the domestic dissension between the ill-matched husband and wife. Pity soon ripened into the warmest gratitude for the devoted care with which Mrs Maynard had nursed him through a dangerous illness. Intimacy increased till he at length made her confident of his intention to adopt as his heir some child of noble, or at least gentle blood, who should shed a light upon his downward path in life. With a vague notion of what might eventually follow, he intrusted the search to his new friend. In early life he had been disappointed in the choice of a wife, and had resolved never to marry, yet his heart longed for some object on which to lavish his affection and his wealth. He had now attained the

summit of his wishes, and was more than happy.

“ Would you wish me to leave Marseilles ?” he said—“ shall I begin life again in a less frequented place ?—I make no profession, but you know me, Mrs Maynard.”

“ No ! I shall soon feel at home here, though not under your roof, still under your protection, with the benefit of your advice. Rosa is young—at her age memory is not very tenacious—in a few months she will have forgotten my existence. I shall watch over her secretly, even while I confide her to your care. My own improvement in all branches of education will be my daily occupation, that I may be fitted to open her young mind. Have I your sanction, Mr Jarvis, to this arrangement—will you confide to me the direction of my child ?”

She read in his silence, in his warm but respectful pressure of the hand she extended to



him, his full and generous acquiescence. Her heart was lightened of its load.

Months and years passed away—Mrs Maynard kept her resolution. She had an all-engrossing interest, and cause for exertion. She assumed the name of Cecil, and for some time remained in perfect retirement, yet silently and secretly watching over her child with jealous affection. She began to cultivate the talents which had been long neglected—her days and nights of watching were repaid through her own exertions—she made her small fortune suffice to her necessities. Fortunately she had but little time for thought, for her lonely moments were bitter enough, when the number of small pupils she gathered around her by day had departed in joyous haste, and left her to dwell upon her changed lot.

The beautiful courted Mabel Stewart, the capricious Mrs Maynard, the deserted wife,

now merged into the homely English teacher of a small day-school in a foreign land! What had she not sacrificed to her own pride, and her child's good, even the outward repression of that maternal love which her heart yearned to shower down upon it!

Many a night might she have been seen pacing slowly up and down in front of Mr Jarvis's house, that the sound of her child's voice might reach her ears. Often was there an accidental meeting under the large trees that shaded the front of Villa Mobile; often the little Rosa brushed past her, prattling to some favourite companion, regardless of her who longed with painful intensity of love to claim her as her own. But she kept her resolution. She was determined that all memory of her should die away before she entered Mr Jarvis's house as the instructress of his adopted child. Yet, bitterly would she sometimes mourn over the

very success of her plan, as day by day she felt that her image was fading away from Rosa's memory.

Nearly three years had passed. Rosa was now six years old. All arrangements had been made, and Mrs Cecil was to begin the course of instruction which Rosa was to receive. As she entered the room in which Mr Jarvis had first welcomed her under his roof, she nerved herself for the first meeting with her child in her altered character. Mr Jarvis was standing by her side. She had taken pains to alter her personal appearance as much as possible. Her hair, which used to fall in long soft ringlets over her child's face as she sat upon her knee, was now braided and confined by a small neat cap, which, though it rather added to her personal attractions, yet gave her a changed and more matronly appearance, and the gay flowing dress which she was accustomed to wear during

her stay in Italy, was now exchanged for one more sober in hue and in form. The new lady with whom Rosa was told she was henceforth to spend the long happy day, who was to teach her all she longed to know, and who was to tell her stories of all the beautiful bright things in earth and sky that she saw around, this new lady was an object in anticipation of the greatest interest.

Rosa had thought, and dreamt, and talked of her, till she had well nigh wearied all the household, but the kind Mr Jarvis himself, with her hopes, and fears, and fancies, and suppositions. At length the moment had really arrived, and Rosa bounded into the room.

No! there was no recognition, nothing that apparently brought back to mind the remembrance of the mother, who was supposed to have died in giving birth to her child.

There was the half shy, half playful pleased

smile, the sidelong glance at the stranger, and in another moment Rosa had rushed into the arms of her adopted father, while the bright colour rose in her cheek. A feeling of disappointment swelled in her heart, as she contrasted the tall dark figure of the new lady with the bright offspring of her childish imagination.

The sacrifice that had been made during three long years had met with its reward—a cruel one it was true.

It would have been luxury for the mother to shed the tears that struggled in her heart, as a feeling of bitter desolation overcame her—but she did not yield. She took the child's hand—she drew her towards her. She told Rosa she was the Mrs Cecil she had expected, that she loved her very much already, and would love her more day by day. Rosa looked into her face, with her large blue eyes, half wondering, half timidly, but most she wondered

why the strange lady should have had tears in her eyes, and why she pressed that long, long kiss upon her lips as she bade her return to her play, for she “ wanted to talk to her papa.”

This was the beginning of a happy life to Mrs Maynard. The child soon returned her love. She was gentle, affectionate, intelligent. She was soon never happy out of the sight of the “ new lady,” and well did she repay all care and tenderness. But we must now turn to other scenes.

## CHAPTER III.

This memory brightens o'er the past,  
As when the sun concealed  
Behind some cloud that near us hangs,  
Shines on the distant field.—LONGFELLOW.

THE old house at Hazelymph was to be re-inhabited. For the last three years, since the death of Mr Dalrymple, the family mansion had all the appearance of being deserted and falling to ruin. Now neighbouring curiosity was excited as to when, and in what manner, under what auspices and similitude the present heir would return from afar to claim his own. The old servants who descended as heir-looms to the present possessor, suddenly awoke to the increased importance which belonged to them,



as they gave or withheld at their will and pleasure the information respecting their new master's movements to the anxious many who sought it at the fountain-head.

Mr Herbert Dalrymple, the second son of the late possessor, inherited the estate through the death of his elder brother. He had left Hazelymph years ago a boy—he was returning a man. Report said he was rich and extravagant. Report also said he was selfish and misanthropical. The old considered him as still young. The young thought that if he had not gained wisdom during his life of thirty-eight years duration, experience had been thrown away upon him. The old servants declared he was open-hearted, generous, handsome, when they remembered him seventeen years ago! In short, Mr Herbert Dalrymple in perspective excited an interest which can only be accounted for on the score of the

inherent love of novelty all possess in a greater or less degree.

Few can say they are not, in some degree, alive to it.

Let the view on which we daily gaze be ever so beautiful in its noon-day brilliancy, we observe, with pleasure, the stealing of the evening shadows across the landscape, and occasionally our eyes even rest with complacency on new scenes of much inferior beauty. The same style of reading does not always suffice to the same person. The philosopher, after a day spent in research, is at times seen absorbed in a work of fiction; and the theologian, through the instrumentality of the oft reprobated drama, has been delighted to improve his knowledge of human nature.

Then in dress, in fashion, how enthusiastically variety is hailed, and how subserviently, and often inconveniently is it followed. Indeed,

the man who ventures to overrule in action, momentary conventionalities, gives proof of a bold and emancipated intellect, or of freezing indifference to the opinion of the world. There is not a greater tyrant than established fashion, nor one that runs a greater risk of being unceremoniously deposed. Fickle human nature raises up one idol on the ruin of another, and for some one gallant deed, which circumstances contributed to bring to light, the man who, equally a hero in the former part of his life, was destined to be passed over without notice, may suddenly find himself the object of most enthusiastic popular applause.

The fact is tolerably well established that novelty has charms from the force of contrast alone. In the life we daily lead every sense may be gratified. Music may delight the ear, the eye may wander pleasantly over the fair face of nature without, or rest upon the evi-

dences of art and refinement within—our well-stored libraries may contain all that is requisite to form the taste and enlighten the understanding, but still the new, the shadowy magical form of the unknown in its varied aspects rivets our curiosity, and encourages our hopes.

If our expectations fade away as the reality becomes apparent, we do not necessarily profit by our lessons in disappointment; and if this be true of the more civilized and educated part of the community, it is no less so of those whose unenlightened minds have a strong yearning towards the marvellous.

Where is the road-side inn that has not in its time attracted its tens and hundreds of passers by, allured by the hope of gratifying curiosity while listening to some strange tale respecting the neighbouring village or mansion? The giant and the dwarf might live and die in their natural homes—the wild beasts of the

forests might still roar in their native solitudes; the beautiful and grand would less frequently be brought before the gaze of the few who really appreciate them, were not the love of the marvellous an instinct which opens the eyes and ears of the ignorant in science, and the careless, as to the future advantages to be reaped by research.

Hazelymph had long been considered in a negative light. There was no resident master, no attempt to keep up the old place in proper style; there had been no balls or dinner parties given within its walls for years; it held no place in the annual country flower-show, no perambulating organ-boy, or third-rate brass band thought it worth while to try their fortune in front of its old grey walls, and smokeless chimneys. Old Mr Dalrymple had for years been a retired invalid.

But now! The actual possessor was

returning home, and speculation was rife as to the probable amount of balls, dinner, and shooting parties Herbert Dalrymple would give during the season. Labourers were calculating on employment in the over-grown pleasure grounds, the hot-houses and green-houses would be renovated; servants out of place would find a new home.

The east wind had blown till all the spring blossoms looked shrunk and withered. It was a dull time of year! Hunting was over, the London season had not begun! When would Herbert Dalrymple appear to the longing eyes of the Hazelymph neighbourhood? "Time brings roses," says the German song, and it also brought Mr Dalrymple's travelling carriage to the station nearest to Hazelymph, conveying the long-expected East Indian to his own family mansion, just when people were

beginning to think he would never come at all.

It was evident that the new possessor was returning from foreign service, to judge by the various articles of luggage with which he was surrounded. First by his side sat in majestic, though somewhat discomfited mood, a large dog of the St Bernard breed, uncouth-looking portmanteaus and hat-boxes were hung about, and lastly, under the jealous eyes of a valet, with enormous whiskers, were innumerable great coats and wrappers, bearing any stamp but that of solid English manufacture.

There was a chillness in the air which told that winter was still capable of resuming a short, though despotic, command over the fickleness of spring, even though a slight tinge of green was beginning to mingle with the rich purple of the distant woods, and the



redder hue of the nearer chesnut and elm trees. But enveloped in a capacious fur cloak, the traveller seemed proof against the after sunset air, while his attention was too much occupied in taking note of the surrounding country for any personal discomfort to be experienced. He was nearing his own house, the home of his fore-fathers for many generations, the home, between which and himself all personal ties had been severed during the last fifteen years, and which he had yearned to behold again, while destined to spend the best of his youth in India. His age at first sight could not have been exactly determined, as an air of gravity and an expression of sternness added in repose those years to his face, which vanished when a smile of unusual sweetness stole over his features—yet at times it was a melancholy smile, as he gazed with an interest which

years had cemented, upon spots evidently well remembered as associated with past recollections. He was driving rapidly through grand forest scenery, opening here and there into soft glades in which the dark green of the ilex and holly, mingling with the less aspiring brushwood, relieved with their bright verdure the brown uniform tint of winters' leafless colouring. At intervals the unusually soft green turf marked the course of a wandering streamlet, while the luxurious growth of lichen on the stems of the older trees gave to the whole scene a rich varied tint; now and then the eye embraced a more extended view which melted away into the blue distance, until, after about an hour's drive through the forest, the stone paths of an Elizabethian house appeared, rising from an amphitheatre of wood. In a few moments Herbert Dalrymple stood in his own hall.

“Glad to be at Hazelymph once more, and to see you looking so hale and hearty, my good Munro,” exclaimed the new comer, as he returned the affectionate, yet respectful, greeting of the old housekeeper, and cast one sweeping glance at the smiling faces of men and maidens who had followed in her train. The first sound of the carriage-wheels had attracted the whole of the household. “I am glad to be here once more, but strange things have taken place, and I am no longer master Herbert of former days,” he added, as, calling his dog to his side, he stood before the large fire which threw an air of comfortable warmth over the richly-furnished hall, and looked around with an emotion he did not much care to repress.

“I have been very lonesome ever since my poor old and young master died, Sir, and, indeed, I am right glad to see you again. Many’s the heart

that has been mourning for the dead, far and near, but now you are come back, Sir, we must welcome you as your father's son should be welcomed. If you had only been here to receive his last words and blessing."

"It was impossible. I was far away when news of his illness reached me; would indeed that I had returned long ago." These words were the expression of thoughts, which linked the present with the past, and could scarcely be said to be addressed to the old housekeeper, who, with the privilege she felt still belonged to her, was standing before her new master, and gazing intently upon him, as if to identify him, tall, dark, and handsome, though careworn as he was, with the bright rosy youth who had left his home some sixteen or seventeen years previous.

"Your room is all prepared, Sir, it is the one at the end of the long gallery, if you please to approve of having your luggage taken there at

once," and as if with the excuse of waiting for an answer, Munro still lingered near her old master's son.

But Dalrymple was living back the quickly flown but all-important years that had laid so strange a hand upon the present moment. He was in the same large hall he remembered as a boy, which, though of fair proportions, had diminished to half the size that his youthful imagination had pictured it. Over the chimney-piece were the portraits of his father and uncle, two bright happy-looking school boys, in green cricket jackets, standing by the bole of a large oak tree. There were likewise other family portraits, grandfathers, and grandmothers, aunts, and uncles, whose pedigree he had spent many a quarter of an hour in unravelling, and who, to his father's horror, he had always taken a somewhat mischievous pleasure in mis-marrying. His elder brother's picture, his favourite,

his play-fellow and friend, whom none in his estimation would equal, was there also, and with one glance at that loved face, never more to be seen on earth, his present loneliness flashed vividly upon him, for he had succeeded to his elder brother's inheritance, and was dependent upon himself alone. Outwardly there was little alteration to mark the flight of time, except that his father's red velvet chair no longer stood in its accustomed place, and that the long, deep, old-fashioned sofa, had been exchanged for one smaller and of less comfortable proportions; but all was changed, and the faithful old housekeeper who had spent her youth and age in the Dalrymple family, would little guess the torrent of thought that was passing through the mind of the last descendant of his race.

Yet she brushed away a tear, partly of joy, partly of sorrow, as she too contrasted, in her simple way, the present with the past.

“ Indeed, Sir, it’s no wonder you’re stricken like with thinking on old days, and I can see you and dear Mr Edward, standing there with the first brace of partridges you ever shot in your hand, as if it was yesterday, and then you threw ’em down at my feet, and told me you’d shoot many a brace more, before you were ten years older, and now, Sir—but it’s all right, and they as have gone to their rest, have left you a fine heritage, as you may well be proud of, and you’ll be a good master as your father was before you.”

“ I have much to do, and to think upon, my good Munro. The responsibilities of a large estate are not few, I scarcely feel fitted for them, as I could wish, but however, it is early days yet. Now lead the way to my room.”

“ And you’ll do your best, you’ll do your duty as well as any of them, Sir, I know, there never was a Dalrymple yet as was a bad landlord ;



but you see you've been so long out of the country, you've well nigh forgotten all about it, and it grieves me to the heart that you're going to live in this great house all by yourself, Sir—you must excuse my freedom, Mr Herbert, but I'm an old servant, and there's no heir after you to all this fine estate."

"Ah, you want me to give you a lady mistress, do you, Munro," but here Mr Dalrymple spoke with more energy in manner than he had hitherto exhibited. "I tell you beforehand, you must be content without having to yield to all the whims and fancies of a Mrs Dalrymple, if you've set your heart upon my bringing one to Hazelymph. No, no, you must be under bachelor government, and be as punctual as the minute-hand of a watch, and put up with all my odd tempers and odd ways, and that you will for old friendship's sake," and he gave the old woman a hearty shake

of the hand, as he dismissed her upon reaching his own room.

He wanted time for thought ; he wanted to be alone again ; he was accustomed to solitude ; he had grown taciturn, and disliked restraint, yet he dreaded the lowliness of his own home. As he sat gazing on the bright fire that seemed determined by its crackling, blazing, and otherwise cheerful manner to make up for deficiencies in the item "companionship," he felt he had scarcely been prepared for the utter desolation which was every moment gaining ground upon him ; he could scarcely summon sufficient resolution to change his travelling dress, and descend to his solitary dinner.

Fifteen years is a long space in the life of any individual, but scarcely at any period does it tell with such effect upon character as from twenty to five-and-thirty. Boyhood has ascended into manhood, strong in good or evil, earnest

in pursuit, or confirmed in sloth, daily progressing towards excellence, or receding from the goal of virtue. Life has reached its culminating point. After this epoch, in few, if in any, is a new power developed, or a long-growing and unchecked foible conquered. Life has also given its promises of failure or success, of sorrow or joy—with few exceptions the tenor of existence partakes of the hue which has hitherto been shed upon it. Most can, in a measure, foreshadow their own destiny, or they are, at least, at the age of five-and-thirty, prepared for any change to which they may be subjected.

Nearly an hour had passed, and in the mighty review of vanished years, which the return to his old home had conjured up, Mr Dalrymple had been forgetful of his promise, that he would soon descend to the common-place and necessary operation of dining, till a knock was heard

at his door, and the old housekeeper again appeared.

“ If you please, Sir—”

“ I know, my good Munro, I shall not do justice to the good cheer you have provided for me, you would say, but you must excuse my dilatoriness.” In less than an hour Mr Dalrymple had dressed, and dined, and, at his command, the old housekeeper was sitting opposite him, in her best holiday suit, drinking to the health and happiness of her new master in a glass of choice wine.

Herbert Dalrymple had always been a favourite at Hazelymph. His memory had been cherished, and his return anticipated with unfeigned delight by all who knew him in his younger days. His very faults had been magnified into virtues by the humbler amongst his friends, his frankness and liberality serving to brighten, in their estimation, those parts of his character

upon which some shadows fell. Strong in his predilections, he was as constant in aversion, and rarely forgave or forgot where he had once discovered a grave error in character. Upright in thought as well as in action, and extravagantly generous—any meanness or dissimulation was visited with unconcealed contempt; while, though he possessed a few true friends, he also made many enemies, from his wanting the power to conciliate when angered. He looked for perfection, and had never found it. Had he any right to expect it?

“ Will you tell me something about the old neighbourhood, Munro, or I shall be enquiring after a deceased generation perhaps!—I feel to have outlived all my contemporaries during my two years’ travels on the continent. I have been in ignorance respecting them. I can scarcely picture myself to myself—except that it is something like old days to see your good-

natured old face opposite to me," continued Dalrymple, endeavouring to drive away some overpowering feeling that claimed a mastery over him, by assuming a pleasant manner.

"Bless you, my dear Mr Herbert, there's not a house in the country but has changed hands, or changed masters, since you were here. You would not know the old neighbourhood again—some are gone, and some are dead, and some married."

"What of the Liddell's?"

"You've hit upon the very worst for changes, Sir. The old gentleman married a young wife, who has dragged him all over the continent for the last two years, and they have sent back such a lot of picters and statutes that they'll not be able to enter their doors when they do return."

"Then the Strangways—Sir George and Lady Mavace?"

“ Ah ! there it is again, Sir. It all comes of people not marrying who they’ve a fancy for. They long found out that they could not agree, and so Sir George stays at home and looks after his hunting, and Miladi has taken the three young ladies to Paris to edecate, and they’ll come back and look dismal the rest of their lives in this country it’s my belief. I believe Langley towers is to be let, Sir George is mighty tired of his lonesome life, I hear sometimes.”

“ These are sad stories, Munro, have you not something pleasant to tell me of.”

“ Well, indeed, Sir, I hope you don’t think I can only speak ill of the neighbours—but there are some in their right places yet. There’s the Rector, as good a man as ever breathed, only some thinks his sermons are rather long—he never leaves the parish from one year’s end to another’s, and there are the



two old Miss Crawford's—they live in the big house, as it's called; and old Sir James Pulling; he has come rather nigher us; and, may be you may remember—”

“ Yes, yes, my good Munro, I remember all you intended saying,” exclaimed Dalrymple, somewhat impatiently, “ I shall be glad to hear of all my old friends in time, but—”

“ Lor bless me, Sir, what a forgetful old woman I am, and you so patient sitting there listening! I should have told you first about Squire Neville's family! of course you wants to know particular about them, though that's not what it was when the beautiful Miss Mabel Stewart was always at Linwood.”

“ What is not as it was, Munro?”

“ Oh, Sir, I mean—but what's the use of raking up old stories—it's all gone by, and you'll be none the happier—nothing is as it was—I think I had best not say more about

it, for you were great friends in former days, I remember well."

"She married, Munro, did she not," said Dalrymple, very quietly, as he re-filled the old woman's glass, and threw an additional log on the fire.

"Oh, yes, Sir—she married, in course, about two years after you left for India. Lor! what a day that was—I thought as you must have heard, which made me more diffident like in telling you, Sir—you must have heard all, at the time!—it's a long while ago since that day. Yes, she married, that beautiful Miss Mabel."

"Well, tell us all about it." Her master's patience was again on the wane. "Yes, Sir, that I will in time. She married a right handsome gentleman some said, as he was—but I thought he never had your's, nor Mr Edward's, downright look-you-in-the-face man-

ner, and so it has turned out, you see. She might have waited a bit, Sir. She need not have been in such a hurry—so handsome and pleasant-looking as she always was, and with all the world, high and low, a loving her.”

“She was not quite as philosophical as you, Munro, I am afraid,” said Dalrymple, contemptuously.

“Well, Sir! may be I’m talking so fast, and you so tired after your long journey, and every thing being so strange, and yet so natural like.”

“No, no, go on, for Heaven’s sake, go on.”

“Well, Sir. The squire and Mrs Neville never overlooked the clandestine act of Miss Mabel’s husband; for you know he married her the night of that grand ball at Linwood—though my belief is that in her heart she was

as true to you as the day you went to India."

Dalrymple writhed under the torture the old woman was unconsciously inflicting, but he was silent.

"You're looking sadly pale and wearied, Sir—but it is a sad story, and I must finish it, if you please. There must have been some underhand business in it, I always thought—it was'n't likely, she so rich, and he so poor. You heard how they went to church, and how she stepped out in her beautiful white satin shoes, all across the lawn, and he by her side, carrying some of her jewels; and her maid packed up all her things in a hurry, and a light was seen in the church, and some thought it was a ghost, but it all came out next morning—but you must have heard all this, Sir."

"Yes, yes, but what became of them?"

“Some say they went to Paris, and at first she used to write home long happy letters, and then there was some slight difference in them. She never mentioned her husband, but she always said she hoped her sister and Mr Neville would forgive her. And then, for years, nobody spoke of them to Mrs Neville. She seemed broken-hearted at first. I believe, indeed, Sir, I believe he’s used her very ill—and some say he’s left her, and spent all her money.”

Dalrymple was wound up to the highest pitch of endurance. It was all too vivid, he felt spell-bound, as if unable to stop the torrent of the old woman’s eloquence, yet he knew all, it was but a revival of past impressions.

“But about the Neville family, Sir, I must tell you, you’ve come home at a sad time, for they are all in great trouble. The Squire with all his great riches once

upon a time, is a bankrupt, and all's going to be sold."

"What Linwood, that beautiful place! This is sad news, Munro."

"Indeed, Sir, it's too true. He's been too generous and too high-minded, and been surety for some friend into the bargain."

"Why did you not tell me this before?" exclaimed Dalrymple, much moved.

"Why indeed, Sir, I've been talking as fast as I can, but there's a great deal to be gone over. All the furniture's going to be sold up-stairs and down-stairs. Mr Neville is as fine and honourable a gentleman as ever lived, if I may give my opinion, but he makes no confidences to his wife or children, and when he gets into trouble who's to help him out of it. It came all of a heap on poor Mrs Neville, but she bears it bravely."

"Are you certain it is all to be sold?"

"So I hear, indeed, and it's my belief they'd be glad to rent the Glen, Sir, hard by, that pretty cottage, you remember, on this property, if you've no objection."

"It must all be inquired into," exclaimed Dalrymple, roused by the recital of actual passing events from the recollections of times gone bye. "I can do good, I can create an interest," he continued, musing, as the old woman again followed up the current of her own ideas.

"You wouldn't believe it was Mrs Neville, she's come out such a fine character, as they say. To be sure, sometimes she looks, and stands, and seems to be taking farewell of all about her, and then she calls her little children about her, and tries to be cheerful, for she wouldn't make the Squire unhappy if she could help it."



“Are there many children?”

“Two grown-up young ladies—one’s engaged to be married, and the other, Miss Mabel—did you speak, Sir?”

“No no; the other, Miss Mabel”—

“Is just coming home from her education, and she’ll be a comfort to her mother. There are two little girls; the only son died, though they made such a to-do when he was a year old he did not live long,—that was a sad blow to the family, too, Sir.”

“Now good night, Munro, and thank you for all you have told me,” exclaimed Dalrymple resolutely rising to put an end to the conversation.”

“Good night, Sir, you’re right not to hear more to-night, and perhaps to-morrow you’ll hear some more about the old country,” and making a respectful curtesy

Mrs Munro left her master to his own reflections.

It was late that night before Dalrymple retired to rest, each corner of the well-remembered home he so dearly loved had been visited, except one room which had been his mother's. Containing, as it did, many cherished remembrances of her, he and his brother had as children never entered it without affection and reverence, the only feelings which her early death had permitted them to experience respecting her.

All was silent in the house, and the small hours already spoke of another day being entered upon, when with sudden resolution Herbert Dalrymple opened the door of his own room, and with noiseless step moved along the gallery towards the apartment he had ever been accustomed to venerate, and which he had hitherto appeared carefully to avoid.

His heart beat quick, as he turned the handle of the door, but by a strong effort he opened it, and unhesitatingly, and as if the past seventeen years could not possibly have effected any change within *those* walls, he moved towards a recess at the furthest end of the room, rather out of sight of any casual intruder.

Yes! the picture was there still; one which had left so indelible an impression on memory, that it seemed as if it were but yesterday that he had stood face to face with it. It was a picture of a girl in all the lovely symmetry of happy, innocent, blooming youth, with an expression of just so much seriousness in the half-downcast eyes, as to make the beholder long to read the thoughts which had fixed it there, yet there was evidence of a merry heart in the dimples that played about the full rosy lips, and a shower of gold-dust

seemed to have been just scattered on the wavy hair, which fell in picturesque and unconfined masses over her shoulders. The figure was slight and girlish, she had evidently scarcely seen twenty summers. Long before this picture Herbert stood; till, as he gazed, he fancied the very canvas moved, and thrilling accents seemed again to speak, as in former years, from the breathing lips. All time was obliterated. He remembered only that he had once loved. He had loved as a boy, as a youth, as a man; with the fervour of his impetuous nature, he had hoped and trusted, he had avowed his love, he was told, he *knew* it was returned, and yet, why had he learnt to look coldly, doubtingly, almost sternly upon woman, and why, the fairer the specimen, why was she the more doubted and all but scorned? He had been wronged, he could neither forget, nor forgive, and there-

fore it was, with that still keen agony, he now gazed once more upon those features, until in the silence of the night he had peopled a fantastic world with living images. He looked, and looked again, still there was the same attitude, the same form clothed in its waving drapery, the same soft drooping eye, and speaking lips.

All, all was gone—It was a shadow that haunted him, that spoke to him. It was a mockery; merely a semblance of the vanished past.

He started, as he pressed his cold hand upon his brow. He had scarcely realised to himself what would be the effect of the trial he had self imposed. Years had made no change in him; he was an expanded, but not an altered being. But circumstances had changed, and now he passed from what he had outwardly been, to what he now was.

He knew he was solitary,—he dreaded solitude, even while he courted it. And where was she, the object of his life's affections? Those with whom she had once held sweet companionship, he now knew were accustomed to pass her over, as if she no longer existed. Perhaps all was over, and life's short troubled dream was at an end. Perhaps, she might be suffering sorrow, remorse,—Why *should* she have deserted him?

Dalrymple had learnt to control emotion. In the throng of his fellow-creatures, he passed for a blasé misanthrope, whose law was honour, and whose feelings were unassailable. But no one witnessed his inward struggles, nor did they see the burning tear that for one instant dimmed his sight as he knelt in speechless prayer in that silent room. It was a prayer that she whom he

had loved, might never have known anguish such as his.

In another moment, and without casting his eyes again upon the portrait, he had risen, opened and closed the door behind him, passed along the gallery, and returned to his own room.



## CHAPTER IV.

“It has always appeared to me that there is so much to be done in this world that all self-inflicted suffering which cannot be turned to good account for others, is a loss, if you may so express it, to the spiritual world.”

SEVENTEEN years!—it is a long time to look forward to, yet short to look back upon, thought Herbert Dalrymple, as the early sun shone into his room on the morning after his return to Hazelymph, and woke him from the deep sleep of weariness, to the consciousness that he was once more at his childhood's home. He dressed hastily, and long before breakfast he had visited many of his favourite haunts, and arranged many a half-formed plan. He was a man

accustomed to face the truth, to look upon it as the truth, which, sooner or later, would make its voice to be heard, and which no flimsy veil could eventually disguise. He had hitherto led an active life, and being possessed of an observant mind, the intercourse he had maintained with his fellow-creatures had enabled him to form a tolerably correct idea of human nature, though his friends and intimate acquaintances were few.

He felt that in his present position, employment for mind and body, and that too of a kind which would both interest him individually, and do good generally, was absolutely necessary. There was one event in his life on which he was resolved not to dwell. The oft-repeated recurrence of those feelings which on the previous night had returned with such force, would be prejudicial not only to his peace of mind, but to his proper mental guidance.

He resolved to consider the past as a dream, and as a time which, putting to flight all romantic notions, which in early youth he had loved to indulge of constancy and truth in woman, had also with its bitterness instilled a salutary caution. It was but natural that on his first return to a spot teeming with such memories as those which rose on all sides around, bygone days should be unusually present with him, and that the pangs of jealousy and indignation which had at first assailed him on hearing of Mabel Stewart's marriage should again be aroused.

But those days were long passed — time should have softened the bitterness of those feelings. The present lay before him, to be stored up in useful deeds which should make the memory of his father and brother, still revered and blessed in their successor. He wished to live principally in retirement. He

had resolved never to marry, yet he was anxious to renew intimacy with old friends and neighbours.

He was haunted with the idea of the Nevilles' change of circumstances! He found himself continually dwelling upon old Mrs Munro's words, and contrasting the picture she had drawn of the present state of affairs with the happiness he had formerly known at Linwood. His long tour abroad after his departure from India had been the cause of his returning to England in ignorance of many changes that had taken place during the last two years. If Mr Neville's affairs were indeed in the ruined state they had been represented to him, the evil might be remedied but not cured. Friendship might indeed do much, and, that there was such an opening for interest and exertion was to Dalrymple a subject of congratulation. The first day he devoted to

renewing acquaintance with many an old tenant and cottager, and retired servant, who all flocked to Hazelymph to welcome him home again; the following morning he found himself awaiting Mr Neville's appearance in the Linwood drawing-room.

It was an anxious moment, that which he passed with his own thoughts, after he had been shown into the empty room. He walked calmly from window to window, he stepped upon the terrace, and even stooped to gather the spring flowers beneath his feet.

The door opened, and the warm shake of the hand, and the kindly voice with which Mrs Neville greeted him, gave him a thrill of pleasure, which for years he had ceased to experience. She was still Mabel's sister to him. Still the kind-hearted, simple-minded Sophy Neville, though time and anxiety had stamped their impression upon her, taking away

from the roundness of youth, and marking some slight lines upon her open brow.

To her, he was still Herbert Dalrymple, with whose remembrance, happy hours were associated; as, in former times, whatever was the length of his stay at Hazelymph, some portion of each day was almost always yielded to the influence which the once happy and beautiful Mabel exercised over him. As she looked upon him, she thought of him as he had been—generous, impulsive, devoted. Now as he stood by her side in the same room in which he had last parted from her sister, all intervening years seemed forgotten, those years which had witnessed his desertion from Mabel, the aspersions upon his character by the neighbouring world, her own reluctantly-called-forth indignation. True, he was altered in expression, in bearing; seriousness replacing the mirth of youth was now the fixed character of his face, yet his voice was as

sweet, his smile as irresistibly winning as formerly.

The first thought that rose in the heart of both, was, Mabel—yet neither uttered the word. For a moment each looked at the other without speaking. With Mabel were associated too loved, too bitter recollections. At that instant a barrier rose up closing for ever the avenue which would have opened out the past history, and have formed a theme for never-ending enquiry and explanation. It was a painful subject—each felt it to be so. All was gone bye—why resort to the irremediable past?

“We meet under altered circumstances,” Mrs Neville hastily exclaimed, as her woman’s tact told her it would be desirable for Dalrymple’s sake, as well as her own, to break the silence. “We were rich, and now we are poor; you have heard all, probably, since your return to Hazelymph.”



“ Yes, with real, great sorrow, dear Mrs Neville, I have been longing to condole with—to assist you, I mean, for mere condolence is useless.”

“ Oh do not say so ! kind words and looks are of inestimable value,” she replied cheerfully. “ I think it is a blessing on trouble, that it teaches you to find out your true friends.”

For a moment Herbert was struck with the tone of decision and quiet reasoning in which these words were pronounced. Individually, Mrs Neville had not much interested him in former days, perhaps owing to the very good-humour and perfect self-composure which distinguished her. He now thought that time, or some unseen influence, had brought out other points in her character ; or at least he had gained a keener insight into it.

“ You and Mr Neville are amongst my oldest and best friends, do make me a sharer in your anxieties. Tell me how I can gratify my

real wish to be of service to you. I am ignorant of all but the fact that Linwood will no longer be your home."

"You can very materially assist us, but probably not in the way to which your generosity points. You know my husband's character—strictly, almost sternly upright. He has incurred large responsibilities, which he will discharge to the uttermost, declining all assistance. We shall not be beggars, though our position will be altered," she continued in a light cheerful tone. "We shall still be very happy."

"But tell me how I can assist you."

"We have set our hearts upon calling the Glen our future home; will you receive us as tenants?"

"It is your's, for old friendship's sake—we shall be near neighbours, that will be pleasant"—he said quickly. "You must exercise your cheerful influence over me, if you will. I fear I

have grown stern, wilful, almost misanthropical, during my absence." He was touching on dangerous ground.

"You are too young to deserve such an epithet," exclaimed Mrs Neville, as she dived into the recesses of her work-basket for a thimble and pair of scissors—she knew she should not find there—"You must seek some good and useful employment. I expect the active life I am about to lead, will shut out all possibility of thought. I shall have household cares, children's education. I am thankful for this."

"You always had a happy disposition." Dalrymple cast a look of approbation, almost of affection on his companion.

"It is a good companion in trouble. The loss of my boy, our only son, was a bitter grief."

"And yet you can speak cheerfully of that," replied Dalrymple, much moved.

"Yes, for all is for the best. This I feel every

day more and more ; he now would have been heir to penury—but that is passed away.”

“ Would that all were endued with your power to cast off care as soon as it becomes oppressive.”

“ There is much in determining to be happy ! oh ! so much—of course life cannot be always couleur de rose. I am blessed with the best of husbands, but sorrow and anxieties have increased his natural reserve. I wish I could give advice and comfort in his difficulties. I am speaking to you as to an old friend.”

“ We are, sometimes, at least, stern uncompromising beings, scarcely deserving of woman’s affection,” replied Dalrymple in an altered tone, for the cord Mrs Neville had struck vibrated unpleasantly on his feelings, “ but *that* affection does not always conquer time and circumstance.”

“ No, I am no great believer in any perfec-

tion." She was anxious to turn the conversation.

"Perhaps Mrs Neville will teach me notwithstanding to consider woman, in time, the truest, as well as the fairest work of this beautiful creation. I really think *you* may teach this lesson," he added less sternly.

Mrs Neville's somewhat timid nature shrank from the tone of irony in which the former part of Mr Dalrymple's remark was conveyed, nor did the expression of unmistakeable contempt, which for an instant raised the corner of his lip, tend to reassure her, but his concluding words showed that a better spirit was at work; she therefore rather meekly replied,

"It is very easy to give, and difficult to receive advice properly; we must make allowances for each other when temptation comes."

"Few would wish to be strong enough to

resist it," he hastily interrupted; "but I am giving vent to feelings fostered by unwholesome retirement; can you pardon me, Mrs Neville? I really feel very penitent."

"I am not inclined to quarrel with you on this first day of meeting after our long separation," she said kindly.

"If you could only teach me control! you exercise it so admirably!"

Before Mrs Neville could reply the door opened, and her eldest daughter entered. A silence of a few moments followed her introduction to Dalrymple, which the latter employed in surveying the young girl with scrutinizing glance. She was of the same age, the same height, as the Mabel he had loved so devotedly, when he had last parted from her in this very room. But there the resemblance ceased. In Eleanor Neville, as she stood before him in the gentle unpretending beauty of youth

and goodness, there were no traces of those treacherous fascinations which had surrounded the every look and movement of the lost Mabel. Eleanor was slight and delicate-looking. Her light complexion varied with each emotion. As she stood beside her mother in her plain walking-dress, her hair smoothed across her brow, allowing the elegant outline of her features to be distinctly visible, she was so fair and beautiful, there was such truth and simple quiet feeling in the modest expression of her blue eyes, that Dalrymple was half tempted to waive in her favour the sentence of universal condemnation he had passed upon female attractions. He felt uneasy in her presence, he rather wished he could have quietly slipped away—he dreaded the undermining of the whole fabric of his anticipations, and his hardly-made resolutions.

How little Eleanor guessed his thoughts as



she quietly seated herself opposite to him, scarcely joining in the conversation, which was carried on between Dalrymple and her mother on the footing of renewed intimacy! She had her own particular subjects for thought; and not being an interested listener, she soon left the room, not on the whole sorry to have escaped from beneath the searching glance of her mother's visitor. Appearances, though not always to be trusted, are often a tolerably correct index of character, and from an observing silence, which we may interpret into disapprobation of our manner or exterior, it is more natural to shrink, than from any open censure we may incur.

Eleanor thought Mr Dalrymple looked stern and unsympathizing, while he was hastily drawing inferences as to the steadfastness and amiability of her character.

“ Mabel and Eleanor are very different—my

two daughters are very opposite characters," said Mrs Neville, following up her own instead of her old friend's train of thought.

He made no reply — Mabel ! The word vibrated upon his ears—there was a magic in it. He thought Mrs Neville unfeeling to have pronounced it. Her Mabel, then, differed from Eleanor. Why should that interest him ? Yet a feeling of curiosity was aroused. Was Mabel proud and haughty, while her sister was kind and gentle ? was she made to command and conquer, where Eleanor would yield ? was she stamped by nature's hand, beautiful, fascinating, fickle as she who had set the seal of loneliness upon his own life ? These thoughts whirled quickly through his brain, even before the sound of Mrs Neville's words had died away.

"I suppose I am very partial, but you will forgive me, I am sure," she exclaimed ; "my

children are blessings to me, one and all, their happiness is my existence, but in altered circumstances such as ours, many a day-dream must be abandoned."

"Teach them to depend upon their own resources, to be strengthened against and prepared for every trial, and for none more than the false adulation of the world," replied her companion, while the shade again stole over his features, which Eleanor's presence had for the moment dispelled. "All the glare and frivolity of life are worth nothing. Solid goodness and virtue and strength of mind, desire that for your daughters, Mrs Neville. The less girls know, the less they learn to attract, the better ; the better wives and mothers they will make in the end."

Mrs Neville looked astonished. Were all her views and fondest wishes to be dashed to the ground so unceremoniously? when she had sacrificed, or rather devoted her whole life to

gain the very ends she now heard so unceremoniously reprobated ?

Poor man ! how she pitied him ! to have lived so many years in India, only to return to England with such gothic ideas ! For the moment she had forgotten his early history. The phantom that rose before her was a dull Hazelymph dinner-party, when her daughter's attractions were to be neutralized through that spirit of indifference to beauty in general she had just heard advocated by Mr Dalrymple. But then Mr Dalrymple was not an oracle. He modified the severity of his former observations, assuring Mrs Neville " that he felt certain she had given her daughters a solid education, and did not wish them to set out in life with vain and romantic notions."

" They are simple, yet refined," she pleaded.

" The natural consequence of the associations which have hitherto accompanied them through

life." Mrs Neville felt satisfied once more. "I have never taught my children how to please, that I think will surely follow their introduction into society." There was a little pardonable vanity mixed up with this remark, thought Dalrymple; but Mrs Neville continued: "Whatever advice you give, I receive as from an old friend; you will promise as such to give me in time your candid opinion of my Eleanor and Mabel."

If there were in these words something soothing to Dalrymple's kind feelings, there was also something rather irritating to his self-love; he was evidently considered by Mrs Neville as 'passé;' as one who was to look on in life while others were acting; who was to take no part in scenes, in which the individual interest of others was concerned. Who on looking into his heart would not have accused the misanthropical Dalrymple of

inconsistency! Yes! he felt annoyed, that he was expected to review the merits or demerits of Mrs Neville's daughters, and to report upon them, without being supposed capable of experiencing either pleasure or pain! He might as well have been that large mirror opposite, put there to receive all impressions and retain none. In that mirror his own manly figure was reflected. It would have told the least observant, that in the powerful mind within, struggles were daily fought between erring human nature and strong governing principle, between hope and disappointment, pride and the kindest of hearts. The next moment Mrs Neville saw with pleasure, that there was a friendly smile upon his expressive lips. He put out his hand to her.

“ You have received me so kindly, we may well say we are old friends. If you

value my opinion, I will not fail to be candid with you on all occasions, when I can be of service; but then my judgment may not be always to be depended on. We view the same object with such different eyes."

"He will not assist me much with my girls," thought Mrs Neville, as the door soon after closed upon Dalrymple's retreating figure; "at least not with Mabel. Eleanor I am rejoiced to think has secured her happiness. I cannot wish her a brighter lot than being the wife of Charles Seymour. What dangers beset a mother's path! Poor Mabel! my own darling lost Mabel! seeing Herbert again makes my thoughts turn to her once more. Could he ever have behaved so villainously! and yet there is no doubt he forsook her; and she!—Herbert always was different from the rest of the world. He was true, now he is almost disagreeably severe. There is some-



thing in his truth which is akin to bitterness now. Perhaps he too has suffered—all the world does at times," and Mrs Neville, with a sigh, looked around her. During her soliloquy she had been moving about, arranging into transposable order various small articles, which, valueless in themselves, give an air of comfort and habitation to the homeliest apartment.

The sale at Linwood was to commence the following week—the room in which the interview with Mr Dalrymple had been held being the only one which had not already undergone material alteration. In all directions, numerous packing-cases were to be seen—favourite arm-chairs, family portraits, many hundred volumes of a choice library, valuable pieces of furniture, were destined to accompany the Neville family to their new abode. Mrs Neville, nevertheless, looked with regret upon many well-known

friends in the shape of cabinets, inlaid tables, and elastic sofas, from which her judgment and rectitude told her she must part. She sighed again as she again looked around her luxuriously furnished drawing-room, in which so many of her happy years had been passed—but the task of dismantling must be begun, and resolutely she set to work to perform it. She had a nervous horror of embarrassed circumstances, and though she had sufficient command of herself not to weary her husband with the repetition of her anxious fears, the difficulties she saw in prospect, brought out many parts of her character which had hitherto slumbered in the repose of prosperity.

How to remain in the same social position she had hitherto occupied, on diminished resources, how to do the best for her husband and children, and keep within the bounds of a narrow income, was the subject that haunted

her day and night. But her peculiar talent lay in managing and contriving, and being naturally of a buoyant, hopeful disposition, she resolved not to be cast down. She was in earnest. She was in earnest in all she undertook. Had Dalrymple entered at the moment, and observed her fingers busily employed in carrying out her resolutions, he would have retracted some of his late remarks, he would have felt that Mrs Neville at least was in her simple energy an exception to a rule he had erroneously laid down. She could decide and act, though she desired accomplishments for her daughters, and had even gone so far as to wish that "he himself were not so much too old for either of them. Hazelymph, and five thousand a year, would have been such a nice home for Mabel!"

## CHAPTER V.

But there are brighter dreams than those of Fame,  
Which are the dreams of love.—Out of the heart  
Rises the bright ideal of these dreams,  
As from some woodland fount a spirit rises  
And sinks again, into its silent deeps.

SPANISH STUDENT.

At length most of the preparations for departure were completed, and the Neville family were assembled at Linwood for the last time. The room and everything around wore a cheerless aspect; even poor Mrs Neville's gaiety gave way to sadness, as she sat by her husband's side, talking over their future plans. Time had changed Mr Neville more perceptibly than his wife. There was more sternness, less suavity,

more decision and thought expressed in his countenance. He was looking steadily at his children, but he did not call them to him ; the little ones did not climb upon his knee, and ask him why he looked so sad. He was mourning over their altered prospects, he loved them truly, yet his cold reserve repressed their affection. How often miseries are thus magnified, where mutual confidence would soften their severity ! Mr Neville fully appreciated his wife's character, she had indeed been a good wife to him. When he blamed his want of foresight and imprudence, which had brought misfortunes upon them, she always soothed his wounded feelings. He thought her a clever arguer, bringing as she did light out of darkness ; but she was not clever, she had merely straightforward common sense, excellent temper, and unfailing energy. As she sat knitting a large purse, often the occupation of those who have not much where-

with to fill it, she pleased herself in contemplating her eldest daughter, Eleanor, into whose willing ear her lover, Charles Seymour, was pouring forth the fulness of his own happiness. Mr Neville, on the contrary, saw only the dark side of things ; adverse circumstances, his wife occupied necessarily with household cares, his children without education.

But contrast, opposition in character, is as necessary to a domestic picture as light and shade are to a landscape. One, should stand at the wheel, while the other works the ship. There should be a check upon impulse as well as a spur to action, rudder and ballast, wings to fly, feet to repose, mind governing heart, sympathy in everything.

Mr Neville knew much of human nature, but he looked upon it through a darkened medium. His wife saw good in everything ;

her trust would have been implicit but for his caution ; his reserve was wanted in opposition to her frankness and simplicity. Thus mutual dependence was produced, and through it a capability of struggling with adverse circumstances, which each fully appreciated. But the study of character is often as difficult as it is interesting. While his wife was his counsellor and his support, inwardly though not openly, his children were apparently removed from him by an impassable barrier. He neither outwardly approved nor disapproved, he neither sanctioned nor prohibited, yet he looked for unquestioning obedience ; he apparently forgot that they were rational beings, to be cherished and guided through the path of life. Was it pride that militated against affection, or is it that human nature is a perpetual enigma ?

Eleanor Neville and Charles Seymour seemed to take their own view of life, as, apparently



undisturbed by haunting reflection, they sat on a deep cushioned sofa in a recess of the window which opened on the terrace. Eleanor was happy, though at times she sighed as if her heart would break when her glance wandered towards her parents; they looked so full of deep thought, and she knew what her mother felt, even when the smile was on her face.

But Charles had won her girlish love, and she knew that she was the light of his life to him. He had told her so often, and often; he had asked her to share his future home; he had never loved any one but Eleanor Neville, and now he was permitted to sit beside her and talk over future plans! It was a very bright future; in another year he was to claim her as his bride. He was dependent upon his uncle, Sir Philip Seymour, an old man, who treated him as his son, and as such watched over what he considered his interests, more

keenly than Charles thought necessary or agreeable. Sir Philip had desired that he should not marry before he was five-and-twenty, and his will was law to his heir presumptive.

Eleanor felt, as she looked at her mother, and thought of Mabel, that the year would pass away very quickly, not *too* quickly, perhaps ! but she had always been so happy ! Charles could not disguise his impatience as he thought over the twelve long months in prospect ; but then he was always impatient, with quick loving impulses, winning at a glance, cordial at a first greeting, honest, open-hearted, brave, possessing all those manly fascinations of face, figure, and manner, which captivate the young feminine heart, and such was Eleanor. She had not yet learnt to think deeply, to compare, to analyse—few girls have at nineteen—and therefore at a later period of life so many

are disappointed. But we cannot be always wise, and no experience is prized but that which is self-gained. Mrs Neville loved Charles Seymour as her son; his disposition suited her's. If somewhat careless of the future, he had the prospect of riches before him; he must have some faults, and caution at his age would be meanness in later life. Thus she reasoned, perhaps, against her better judgment. Eleanor looked so happy, and Mr Neville looked on and allowed the engagement, for it was better that the shadow which fell upon his own path should not darken Eleanor's bright youth. Charles loved her beauty and gentleness, her soft voice, that sweet countenance, that spoke of feelings too deep to be transient, not quickly aroused, but lasting. Eleanor required to be known to be appreciated.

In short, they were very happy, and sat looking

out upon the twilight as if they could pierce through and through the future, which had no existence to their minds beyond the one year of probation. Silence sometimes expresses happiness, but Charles was of a voluble nature, and thought words the most natural medium of communicating ideas, which were all centred in the one being at his side. He could not counterfeit sadness, though his companion's face was less bright than usual.

“And yet I am too selfishly happy,” she replied, in answer to an observation on the subject of her preoccupied manner. “I wish all were equally happy.”

“The day is too short, the year too long for me, Eleanor—do you understand the distinction? What right have parents or guardians, or even such a good uncle as I possess, to put a veto on the period of one's enjoyment in this life. Three hundred and sixty-five more days of penance.”

“So many days allotted to the increase of wisdom and experience,” she replied demurely.

“You are too young, Charles ; you will have time to know yourself,—and I shall have become so attached to the Glen—”

“You cannot torture me, even if you wished it” (her hand, which was very soft and fair, had glided into his), but I shall employ the year in making use of my influence with my uncle. Linstead shall be made a perfect paradise, fit for your reception. I will have half the rooms pulled down and built up again. I only wish to please you, Eleanor.”

“I shall be sure to like everything that suits your taste.”

“How insipid that sounds !—Every woman should have her own way when she can, that is my maxim, and a bride, particularly a beautiful young bride, should be very imperious.”

“And very disagreeable,” exclaimed Eleanor,

laughing. "I hope you will not think the less of me for being very yielding, indeed, I was never formed for commanding. We must both learn prudence."

"Prudence! a word never found in my vocabulary, meaning everything stupid, commonplace, and unexceptionable."

Some vague notions of proper economy and management Eleanor had lately gained from her mother, were somewhat outraged by this unqualified disapprobation of one of the cardinal virtues, but she had not much talent for lecturing or disproving Charles's theories, and thought she had given him already very good advice by hinting that there was such a virtue as prudence!

"You know nothing of Linstead, therefore I cannot ask your advice, but I think you would like the conservatory enlarged, the room that will eventually be your boudoir hung with blue

silk, and panelled in gold and white; the library is a dismal room, I must lighten that in time, and have all those fine pictures I bought last year hung round the hall."

"And do you think I shall be happier for living in luxury and splendour?"

"No, I do not think you will; but I want to show my love for you. I do not think you can yet fully appreciate it, you do not know me, nor the power I possess with my uncle."

While he spoke he had a few misgivings that his extravagant inclinations were not wholly sanctioned by Sir Philip—but hopefulness was one of Charles Seymour's attributes. It was almost a failing. He always thought things would turn out as he wished. He had not yet learnt many hard lessons. He had many friends—or rather many who styled themselves such, for it was regretted by Sir Philip that



fashion, a merry disposition, and convivial tastes, were sufficient passports into the good graces of his nephew, irrespective of judgment or worth. Charles's expectations were his bane, and his friends' support.

"You are kind and affectionate to my heart's content, dear Charles, and how can I be sufficiently grateful for it; but you must not sacrifice every thing to me," again urged Eleanor's soft tones. "Life is so full of duties," she added, as she smiled at her own seriousness.

"I love you dearly to lecture me, perhaps in time I may become very obedient. But there is time enough for duties, Eleanor dear—though I know there are taxes upon riches and happiness. But I must ride while I am a light weight, and shoot, and hunt, and dream of you, and of the end of this long year. I am so happy!"

How could Eleanor cast a shadow over that

light, careless spirit, so rejoicing in itself? If lately she had learnt to have some misgivings as to the future, they were silenced as she listened to her lover's words, so contradictory to all the experience she had lately gained. She knew that cares would come. Even her mother's tenderness could not conceal this truth from her; and her father's anxious face had long confirmed its reality in his case. But at nineteen the whispers of hope are too sweet to be silenced. At that age great griefs and bitter disappointments have seldom thrown forward their long shadow. It is not upon others' feelings, it is upon our own that we depend. Friendship, love, clothed in romantic, and if not unreal, at least in transient colours, form the basis of that fabric on which the sparkling bubble of happiness floats. Those who can look backward as well as forward tremble for, while they admire and sympathize with, the trusting spirit of youth; but few

would willingly withdraw the veil which hides the rugged path conducting to maturer years.

And so they still sat, and talked, and hoped, and feared, and always ended where they first began, until the twilight had changed to night, and the candles were burning in their accustomed places on the large round table, and the last evening at Linwood was drawing to its close. They had not been long engaged, and all was still so new ! The first meeting, the county ball, the very waltz tune, the dress so well remembered in its full minutiae, the hasty parting, the haunting last words, formed themes of never-ending interest ; and while all was now certain, how wonderful it was that doubt could ever have existed. And then Charles spoke of his former life, of his uncle's kindness, of his friends' affection, of all the merry days which had rendered life a perpetual holiday. He would not have disguised the

truth, not for worlds would he have wished to deceive Eleanor, to gloss over his failings, or to magnify his virtues, and yet a fruitful source of misery lay hid beneath the fair surface of which Charles himself, knew neither the extent nor the power. He was without governing principle, he had never learnt to uphold the right because it was the right. What was seemingly bright and pleasant as it lay upon his path he chose. He had not yet learnt, that temptation to evil lurks beneath the fairest exterior, and that even the most amiable impulses of human nature are not to be followed without careful examination. Report said truly, but report is often disbelieved where there exists a predisposition to think favourably. Report said Charles Seymour's intimate friends, Hastings and Beverley, were his evil geniuses, but he only saw the bright side of their character,

and he longed to introduce them to Eleanor, that they might learn to value each other.

“But are they true, real friends,” she exclaimed hastily; “have you ever put their virtues to the proof?”

“Eleanor philosophical!” he replied, laughing; “surely caution and suspicion do not belong to your gentle nature.”

She blushed, she fancied she had displeased him, but her natural timidity gave way before the jealous affection he inspired.

“I know you are invaluable to them, Charles, but *I* wish to take care of *your* interests. If your friends lead you astray, if they encourage your generosity to meet their own ends, and all this *has* been rumoured, they may destroy *OUR* happiness for ever.”

“You speak too seriously, Eleanor,” he

replied carelessly, though her words made more impression than he cared to show.

“Your uncle!—you know we are perfectly dependent upon his generosity and partiality,—if you displease him, will you be able to make your peace with him?”

“He loves me too much to do me any serious injury. Nothing can disturb our happiness,” he added gaily, “so put away all these silly thoughts; and, with regard to my friends, I only do as I would be done by—you would not have me mean and selfish. Where have you gained your experience in friendship?”

“Some knowledge comes naturally, I think,” she replied. “Since I have known you life has worn quite a different aspect. I am always dreading lest my happiness should be taken away, I prize it so dearly. I try not to blind myself to your faults too, Charles.”

“And you have discovered so many! Cre-

dulity, thoughtlessness, extravagance ! I thought love was blind."

" I think it makes us more keen-sighted ! But defects even are loveable sometimes !"

" You are ingenious. So quiet and demure, and so much penetration ; you put to shame my experience !"

" I am glad I have taught you to value my superiority," she said, laughing, as they rose to finish their conversation on the terrace.

Had Charles been of a less light-hearted disposition, Eleanor's words might have been considered omens of evil, coinciding as they did with various warnings he had of late received from his uncle. But with his usual elasticity of mind, he dismissed a subject as soon as it became unpleasant to him to dwell upon it, trusting all would come right in the end. Eleanor's observations were indeed based upon no solid foundation, and she soon yielded



herself to the charms of the present moment. Charles talked gaily, and rallied her upon the sentimental leave she took of all the home scenes, as she was preparing to part from them for ever! And yet he would not have had her less feeling, less alive to sorrow and to happiness, as he told her that the time to come would eclipse the brightness of the time past. Of course an eternally springing source of thoughts and words was beside them, as moments passed they scarcely knew how.

They thought they were learning each other's character.

## CHAPTER VI.

Retribution is often spread over a long time, and so does not become distinct until after many years.

—EMERSON.

IN one of the northern counties of England which is watered by the intersecting streams of the north and south Tyne, and amidst scenery which, if not grandly mountainous as that of Scotland or Wales, boasts of many a fair spot of undulated wooded beauty, was situated Linstead Castle, the possession of Sir Philip Seymour, Charles Seymour's old bachelor uncle. Following the course of the rivers which flow through the rich pasture lands of Cumberland and Westmoreland are still to be

seen the remains of these old border castles, raised by the hand of proud nobility, and which the touch of revolution has destroyed.

There arises in the mind of the tourist a melancholy mingled with pleasure while surveying such departed and now desolate grandeur, as, laying down fishing rod, or sketch book, he spends in dreamy contemplation an hour or two of the long summer day. Before him are the grey ivied tower, the unroofed cloister, with its solid masonry, in which the sycamore or mountain ash has taken root, the blue river reflecting in its still depths the moss and lichen of ages past. Silence and solitude are undisturbed save by the rook or jackdaw, as they build their nests in some retired corner of the old walls, or skim overhead through the soft summer air.

To such picturesque beauty the romance of fancy grants that admiration which is denied

to the substantial comfort of modern habitations !

Sir Philip Seymour was amongst the few whose property had not changed hands during the civil wars, and looking, as he did, from the window of his old-fashioned library, on his own broad unmortgaged lands, he felt, at seventy-five, as proud of his name, his ancestry, and his possessions, as if his race of life had but begun. As the heir to Linstead, Charles Seymour was looked upon with envy by most of his acquaintance, and if having hitherto had an almost unlimited command of his uncle's purse could contribute to his happiness, he had reason to consider himself a fortunate individual.

Sir Philip was much attached to his good-looking, light-hearted, easy-tempered nephew ; but while encouraging the generous and extravagant impulses, which in young Seymour did not require much fostering, he had also un-

ceasingly warned him against those ultra proceedings of lavish expenditure, which would be likely to lead to ultimate embarrassment. If Sir Philip disliked parsimonious youth, he no less dreaded the diminution of the family estate and family consequence, while to Charles it was particularly difficult to steer a middle course between extravagance and over-caution, as he had a great many very dear friends, to whom his assistance was indispensable, and the charms of whose companionship weighed heavily in the balance against Sir Philip's advice.

It was not without regret that the old man, in the privacy of his own library, and amidst the silent portraits of his ancestors, often reflected upon the probable consequences of his nephew's easily worked upon disposition. The thoughts that flitted unpleasantly, and, though

at the close of his seventy-fifth year, still vividly across his mind, were not the offspring of observation alone, for with the name of the nephew he so fondly loved, were associated not unqualified praises of kindness and good fellowship. With his liberal allowance he was known to be always in debt, nor was it less certain that he had made his large expectations a plea for the raising of many sums to be repaid with exorbitant interest when he should be in possession of Linstead.

On these, and such-like fruitful themes for anxious thought, old Sir Philip dwelt with constantly recurring annoyance, when he reflected that during the years of early youth his own blind partiality had fostered the very faults and indiscretions he now deplored. He often asked himself what might not be the consequences of his nephew's becoming possessed

of Linstead? The answer was, probably ruin, or, at least, a considerable diminution of the family estate.

Sir Philip had but one other relation in the world, a distant cousin, of the name of Percival, some years older than young Seymour, and who, having lived a roving life, had for a long period been unknown to him by all but by name. For some months past, Percival had taken up his abode in the neighbourhood of Linstead. He came—no one knew whence—he lived in a quiet, unobtrusive manner, occupying himself in reading and fishing, rarely mixing in society, yet generally spending a portion of each day in relieving the tedium of the old baronet's existence. Upon the events of his own life he seldom touched, whether from a feeling of modesty, or from a disinclination to dwell upon subjects which might be connected with unpleasant memories : he was in the habit of confining



his conversation to such topics as he knew were personally interesting to his old relative.

With young Seymour he was on the best of terms, assuming in his manner towards him a slight superiority, which, through his maturer years and his varied experience of life, was tacitly allowed him by the younger man. By Seymour's principal associates, Hastings and Beverley, his society was eagerly courted; while old Sir Philip himself, felt that he was daily becoming more essential to his comfort. Some said it was remarkable that so close an intimacy should have suddenly sprung up between Sir Philip, who was so far advanced in years, and one considerably his junior, from whom circumstances had hitherto entirely estranged him; but at length, all who cared to investigate, except the over-wise or the unusually ill-natured, came

to the conclusion that Percival's roving inclination, and an innate love of the wandering art of angling, had induced him to spend a few summer months beside the banks of the beautiful Tyne. As to Charles Seymour himself, he was of far too unsuspecting and guileless a nature to augur any ill to his future prospects, from the near neighbourhood to Linstead of one whom he reckoned amongst his best friends. It was also a great comfort to feel that, when he was himself absent, his uncle had in Percival a kind and pleasant companion.

It was the day following that on which Seymour had lavished on Eleanor the full expression of the bright hopes which he lived but to see realized. To him the future seemed an unclouded vision of wealth and worldly prosperity. The old man did not see through the same medium. He sometimes doubted, where

Charles implicitly believed, and feared, where his nephew hoped !

He had drawn his chair to the window, and was contemplating the sunset which lit up with gorgeous beauty the young green of the woods, a ruin which crowned a neighbouring hill, and the silvery Tyne which flowed beneath. He looked the picture of venerable age, on which the winters of time, more than the fiery trials of affliction, had set their peculiar mark.

Opposite him sat Percival. He had dropped in to spend, as usual, an hour or two with his old friend. Quiet, almost demure, yet perfectly refined in manners and appearance, his, seemed a character peculiarly formed to adapt itself to circumstances. Experience, and on the whole not of a pleasing nature, had evidently been gained by him, maturing judgment, but not subduing feeling. Such was the inference drawn by most,

who marked the mild decision in the tones of his voice, and the depth of meaning expressed in his dark, handsome eyes, and firmly closed lips. He had lived to gain at least the mastery over himself. Suddenly, as if following up the train of thought produced by a preceding conversation, Sir Philip broke the silence.

“It is strange that age is so tenacious of life, and all the pleasures and even cares belonging to it! And yet, Reginald, it is time that I should loosen all ties—all—all,”—he repeated slowly. “I would fain set my affairs in order.”

Percival did not reply, but he bent towards his old relative in an attitude of reverential attention.

“My heart misgives me that this boy, this Charles, whom I have fondled and petted like my own child, yes, whom I have coaxed and spoiled, and loved and lived for, will not do justly by the rich heritage I have brought him

up to think will be his. The idea haunts me night and day. Could I rest quietly in the church-yard if all were being squandered, as I fear it will be?"

A smile of calm satisfaction, unobserved by Sir Philip, lit up Percival's countenance, but it soon regained its usual stedfast repose, as he replied: "Do not wrong your nephew, my dear Sir; his are but the follies of youth, to which time will prove the surest remedy; his expectations are so large, (he pronounced these words with peculiar emphasis,) you must forgive his indiscretions; he has so many calls upon his purse—dear, generous Charles."

"Do you think time will apply a sure remedy," exclaimed the old man anxiously. "Percival, you know the world, you are not blinded by my foolish affection; can I trust my boy?"

"He has the best intentions, I can answer thus far; as for myself—"

“But what are intentions? they, we know, pave the road to ruin. Intentions, intentions! All have good intentions, some time or another, during life; but without firm principles, are they ever brought to bear upon circumstances in the hour of need?” replied Sir Philip with unwonted energy. “Can you say nothing more in favour of my open-hearted, spendthrift nephew?”

“I can say everything in his favour, Sir Philip. I repeat, he is kind, generous, affectionate, confiding.”

“The very qualities I most dread, even while I love them, unless belonging to a character both solid and amiable. Is he to be trusted? Can he resist temptation? Is he led by good example or bad, that’s the question?”

“I suppose he is, as most young men are, swayed by impulse: it is, I allow, most necessary

that Seymour should be particular in the choice of his friends."

"I agree with you," replied Sir Philip, as he looked kindly upon Percival. "It is most necessary his friends should be men of worth, whom he can love and esteem. Your friendship I have been pleased that he should cultivate, but all do not resemble you."

"Perhaps I have more experience than Beverley, and may differ from Seymour in some essentials," Percival quietly answered, without any assumption of mock humility, which he knew to be particularly displeasing to the straightforward old Baronet; "but it is hardly fair to judge harshly respecting Charles and his friends. I believe their possessions are all common property."

"Which means that that infatuated boy is rich, or fancies himself so, and that his worthy



friends are poor and liberal. Why are they to build upon Charles's expectations? This must be looked into; expectations! they will soon crumble into penury, beneath the weight of loans, mortgages, debts, carelessness, and robbery."

The old man slowly rose and walked about, evidently much agitated, every now and then stopping to gaze upon the quiet scene without. His own broad lands mostly lay stretched before him. He loved his home with a devotion few of his years experience. Here his youth had been spent under trying circumstances. Prudence and rectitude had relieved him at length from all embarrassment, and enabled him, for many years past, to live both wealthy and respected. One phantom had of late haunted him. He fancied he saw his nephew sitting at the head of a set of riotous companions, wasting his substance, as the prodigal son had done.

“Reginald, I have trusted you as a friend. You know my affection for Charles Seymour. You know what it must cost me to enter upon the course I have resolved to take. You once promised me your assistance. It is absolutely necessary to my peace of conscience. Tell me, has anything transpired? I do not say Charles would not confess the real truth to me, but—”

“Yes, yes, I understand,” replied Percival, as if anxious to save the old man the annoyance of further explanation. “You are, of course, unwilling to appear to curb your nephew’s inclinations, though you consider it your duty to discover his bent.”

“Exactly so. I know you are a real kind friend to my poor boy. You have both judgment and decision. Now tell me,” and the old man’s life seemed almost to hang upon Percival’s expected answer, “have you reason to imagine

he has, or has had, to any extent, dealings with that hateful money-lending, extortionate race, the Jews."

"Youth is not cautious in general," replied Percival, deprecatingly. "Of course various temptations must, and in this case do, I am sorry to say, assail inexperience. Gambling debts must be paid—friends must be assisted,—a stud of hunters draws somewhat heavily upon the purse."

"I know, I know," gasped the old man, "and I make him an allowance in proportion. But gambling debts—what did you say—speak openly."

"I do not wish to give unnecessary pain, Sir, your nephew has not been working in the dark, excuses are to be made for him ; you have brought him up as your heir, the heir of great wealth," said Percival, whose coolness strangely contrasted with Sir Philip's strong emotion.

“Yes ! but it is yet not too late—gambling debts ! unsay those words if you can ; do not say that Charles can be accused of so frightful and mean a sin as gambling. Is he a gambler ?” he repeated solemnly.

“I would that I were not the channel through which any painful knowledge is communicated, Sir ; but as you bid me bring you proof, I have, for once, acted not only against my inclination, but my conscience. I should not have chosen the office of spy upon your nephew’s movements willingly—promise me that you will not betray me, that the substance of this conversation will never be divulged”—at the same time Percival produced a slip of paper from the recesses of a pocket-book, which he handed to Sir Philip. It was a promissory note for the payment of 3,000*l.* on or before a certain date, signed Charles Seymour.

“You are deceiving me, or I am indeed a

miserable old man." There was a pause as Sir Philip read and re-read the words mechanically, while his countenance showed that he was painfully agitated. "Is it true?" He looked steadily at Percival, as if to read the depths of his heart.

"It is not my intention to deceive you, Sir Philip," replied the latter coolly, as he took the paper out of the old man's trembling hand and returned it to his pocket-book. "This document has been entrusted to my care, upon my standing surety for the amount, in case it should not be returned to the safe keeping of your nephew's creditor. I have run a risk to obey your commands. I detest insinuations; now you can place Seymour upon his guard, you may teach him an important lesson."

"It is too late. He has deceived me. He is a weak, foolish boy; away with him! he shall not inherit Linstead."

“I am not surprised at your momentary anger, Sir, but see him and you will forgive him ; it is impossible to resist the charm of his manner—so open, so confiding, and earnest.”

“So much the worse—he knows I have loved him, that I have denied him nothing.”

“Do not stigmatize him as a confirmed gambler,” urged Percival ; “youth is exposed to so many temptations ; a few throws of the dice, a few hundreds staked at cards, and unforeseen ruin arises. To what expedients must not the victim of fate or treachery resort, to preserve his honour ? ” Percival continued speaking as if with the hope of softening to pity and forgiveness the angry feelings he had aroused, but his listener appeared lost in thoughts which were easily conjectured by the painful working of his features.

“I have promised concealment, or I would instantly summon Charles to my presence



and dismiss him for ever. Do not think it is anger, that it is respect to the paltry gold, that sways me. I am grieved: my purse, my door, my heart, have ever been open to him, and he has practised upon me with the semblance of duty and affection. He has, then, already laid claim to that which is still in my power, and which may not, probably never will be in his." He looked sternly, sorrowfully upon Percival. How he longed that the next words he should pronounce should be words of comfort; how fearfully he dreaded his own resolution.

"Deal with him leniently, warn him," said Percival, calmly.

"He has been warned, at times kindly, at times with authority. I have long feared this disclosure would come, Reginald. It has undone me; one more warning, the last,—if in vain, he must suffer."



“Riches are certainly not without their snares and troubles,” exclaimed Percival, carelessly. “When all is totally beyond one’s grasp that is in general so eagerly courted it is comparatively easy to be contented, but it is difficult not to build upon the future when——”

“I repeat, Charles has no certain future to build upon.—A few months, perhaps even weeks or days, and I shall be at rest for ever, but my voice shall be heard even in the tomb. It shall preserve, I am resolved, those beautiful woods, these old walls; yes, and they shall stand as memorials of my justice, rather than of a foolish, fond affection.”

The seed had been sown in fertile soil, the mine had been sprung. In a few more moments Sir Philip was left to his own unpleasant reflections, while Percival returned to the quiet abode he had established in the

neighbouring farm-house. He hastened to dress for dinner, and that very evening joined Seymour and his inseparable friend Beverley at Molverley Abbey, the seat of the Earl of Merivale.

## CHAPTER VII.

MR Trevelyan had lately succeeded to the estates and title of the Earl of Merivale, and was entertaining a bachelor party during the Easter recess. It was a small, pleasant party; all were young but the host himself and Percival, and he was scarcely middle-aged. The Earl was sleepy and good-natured, and the young men felt perfectly at home, and played their parts entirely to their own satisfaction. Percival was looked upon as an oracle by the two particular friends, Beverley and Seymour, his wisdom being so

unobtrusive that it just served as a pleasant ballast to their light-heartedness.

Hastings Beverley was the eldest son of a peer, but had absolutely no expectations, in the world's sense. His father was too poor to make him an allowance answerable to his requirements, and therefore it was a matter of course that Hastings should be always in debt, out of which Seymour's liberality often extricated him. Indeed, round the heart of Linstead's reputed heir, he had completely wound himself, much to the annoyance of old Sir Philip.

Percival, who was acknowledged as a distant relation, had become acquainted with Seymour during a tour abroad, and he had too much tact not to make the most of this relationship. He knew the character he had to deal with in young Seymour. He thwarted him just sufficiently to make him

feel that his was a superior quality of mind, and yielded, at the very moment when it would have been distressing to Seymour to feel his own inferiority very strongly. He never encouraged him to enter into the society of those with whom he was totally unacquainted, and never introduced him to any who were not to all appearance perfectly well-bred. For Seymour was by nature as refined, as he was susceptible to impressions. He never prompted him to the performance of any duty that would have been positively distasteful, but made him aware that if he had followed his advice, some difficulty (and Charles's path was not always clear) would have been obviated. In literature, in art, in the knowledge of every-day occurrences that must be gained by those who would pass through life with the character of being pleasant and useful companions, in all in which

Seymour most coveted to excel, Percival contrived to keep just one step beyond him. To his tact he had decidedly owed his advancement in society. Without tact he would have been agreeable, but he might have shone too brilliantly; he would have been skilful, but he might have excelled too frequently; he might have been reckoned bold instead of courageous; had he been only good-natured and humble, he would have been sneered at, trampled upon, tolerated.

With some, tact is mere knack, but it is not necessarily so—there is the tact of a kind heart, the tact of quick perception. It is as removed from apparent indifference, as it is allied to outward sympathy. You may be perfectly good-natured; without tact you will offend, and perhaps touch on the very point you should have avoided. You may talk at the very moment when it is desirable that you should be

a listener, or you may outstay your welcome, though pride be your characteristic fault. You may be appreciated and loved by those who know you well without tact, but you will be certain to make enemies among your casual acquaintances. Percival knew Seymour—but Seymour did not know him. But Seymour knew Beverley—he knew him to be kind-hearted, but an unprincipled, fashionable spendthrift. He knew that he possessed fascinations that few could withstand, whether young or old, high or low, men or women. Hastings Beverley had but to appear with his tall, manly figure, his perfectly refined manner and address, his frank, handsome face, for every eye to rest pleasantly upon him—and when he spoke he was still more attractive, each one whom he addressed feeling the object of his immediate interest. How could his dark blue eyes, and peculiarly sweet-toned voice, fail to disarm that spirit of



criticism which might have found fault with a certain want of depth in his pleasant conversation !

Beverley was a gambler by nature—Seymour one by habit. They met—acquaintance soon increased to intimacy—intimacy, which was the rise of one upon the ruin of the other.

Poor Seymour ! he was so kind-hearted—so fond of his friends ! As he strolled out on the terrace after dinner, his arm within Beverley's, while Percival and others were listening to the Earl's reminiscences of the last half-century, he confided to him his happy prospects.

“ You're a lucky fellow, Charles ! I am glad you've shown your spirit, and are going to marry a girl without a shilling. What's the use of money in this world ? ” he added, with a quick, hearty laugh.

“ Come, that's not your real opinion, old

fellow! I dare say I could find you many pretty girls, who would be ready to become Mrs Hastings Beverley, but heiresses are not so easily managed. I mean my Eleanor's home to be a perfect paradise. You must be introduced to each other some day—not quite yet though, I think,” and Charles smiled as he looked full into the face of his handsome friend, as he felt that he, with comparatively so few attractions, had secured the treasure of Eleanor Neville's affections. “No, I do not think I should ever be jealous, Hastings.”

“If you were, you must have a poor opinion of your Hampshire enchantress. It's not likely any girl would give up you and Linstead for me and nothing.”

“No, certainly not,” and Seymour laughed merrily. It would not have been quite so merry a laugh if he had at that moment looked into the heart of his uncle, Sir

Philip, as he sat musing in his old arm chair.

“ Well, now, I’ve listened to you, like a true friend that I am, and I know where to look for perfect beauty, perfect temper, and perfect happiness ! can you in return tell me any thing about that little commission you promised to execute for me ? ”

Beverley drew his friend a little forward, speaking in somewhat lower tones, as he knocked away the ashes of a fragrant cigar he balanced between his finger and thumb—  
“ Not much difficulty in the matter, I hope, eh ? ”

“ No ! make yourself easy, you man of small fortune and great requirements,” exclaimed the good-natured Seymour—I gave my promise, and that is all-sufficient—it appears. I left the whole thing in Percival’s hands. He is a rare genius.”

“That’s all right—who would not be heir to such a rich old uncle, and have such a talent for obliging his friends as you have, Charlie.”

“Yes—but there must be a stop put to all this—money won’t last for ever ; Jews won’t lend for ever ; lands decline being mortgaged for ever without changing hands. Come, come, there is reason in all things, and you must begin to give up your ruinous, aristocratic tastes, as pay-day will come at last—don’t think I’m going to turn miser ; but, at times, I have a slight twinge of that searching monitor called conscience—I am deceiving my good, dear old uncle.”

“Keep your own counsel, and mine, for mercy’s sake, or we are ruined,” and for one moment an unpleasant prospect of dishonoured cheques, and fallen hopes, made Beverley’s heart sink within him. Be true to yourself, Charley boy, there’s not a kinder friend in the world,-

come, it's only for a time," he added, coaxingly; "you shall be repaid as soon as ever I have it in my power. But are you sure of Percival?"

"Perfectly; why do you ask such a question? Perhaps I might doubt him if he encouraged me in my extravagance; but he is always giving me good advice, he must be my friend."

"Well, well, you are considerably in his power, remember."

"How unlike you, Beverley—you do not want to warn me, as some have done, against him, because he is a favourite with my uncle, do you? I place the most implicit reliance on his good offices. I know he has my interest at heart."

"I trust so, most sincerely,"—and Beverley spoke truly.

"My uncle has a high opinion of Percival,

and his advice has great weight with him. He has often acted the part of mediator between us. If Sir Philip ever knew the extent of my speculations and embarrassments, Hastings, what would become of us!"

"We should be ruined, that's all," replied the latter, while he felt more uneasiness than he cared to show, for Seymour was implicated for him to a considerable amount.

"I should lose all his kind, fatherly love—he would spurn me from him. How ungrateful I have been."

"Your conscience is unnaturally tender this evening, Charlie," exclaimed his friend, who was not wholly pleased at the turn affairs seemed to be taking.—"Say nothing that implies self-accusation—there is no use torturing yourself—you've been a generous fellow all your life, and can't be expected all at once to become as sage as old Percival;—besides,

what is the use of being brought up with expectations if you never catch them when you fly after them—your uncle won't disinherit you, never fear!"

"What a torturing idea—disinherit me!—no, not quite that. Percival, even with all his anxiety for my welfare, has never hinted at such a possibility. Poor Eleanor! but indeed it is not wealth that I care about. I only value it as a means to gain an end. Not inherit Linstead!—to whom could Sir Philip leave it?"

"I only warn you not to allow Percival to be too much with Sir Philip. There may be no harm in him, but there's no knowing."

"Linstead's about seven thousand a year," replied Charles, thoughtfully. "I can live well upon four or five. Eleanor has not expensive tastes. I would not touch a tree, if I could help it, when I came to the property. My



poor uncle is so fond of every twig and stone ! Two or three thousand a year will have to go to pay off old debts. Compton has been dabbling in railways, he tells me, with that three thousand I borrowed for him, at 8 per cent., and it seems the line's a failure !”

“ Poor Charles !” exclaimed Beverley, for the moment sincerely touched by his friend's much-abused liberality. “ I believe your heart is made of gold, as well as your pocket. You know I would do anything I could to serve you, and in the meantime I promise you some famous shooting at Beverley, where it is my intention you should spend the honeymoon. ’

These last words brought back happier ideas to Seymour's mind, from which a thoughtless gaiety could not long be banished. He even totally mistrusted Beverley's penetration, when, on regaining the party in-doors, he fixed his eye

steadily on Percival, with the intention of discovering in him a rival, if possible. He only saw in him the friend he trusted implicitly.

In the meantime the whist table had been set out; Percival, after an animated discussion with one of his friends, having come to the conclusion that vice was the greatest tyrant next to an empty purse, fortunately contriving during the course of the evening to replenish his at the Earl's expence.

The following morning, Seymour, having bid adieu to his friends, who were starting for Ascot, rode over to Linstead, for he had received a summons, saying that Sir Philip was slightly indisposed, and was anxious to see him.

As the door opened the old man turned hastily round. For a moment a gleam of pleasure lit up his countenance when he saw

his nephew, but a shade of displeasure instantly replaced it.

“ Had I known you were unwell, my dear uncle, I would have given up every engagement to come to you ; there is nothing serious, I hope,” he continued, looking anxiously at Percival.

Sir Philip was pleased—there was no mistaking the meaning of Charles’s open countenance.

“ Would you give up everything, Charles ?” said the old man, kindly. “ That is too much to ask. But we must talk upon these subjects a little. I want you to give up something—namely, your too extravagant, your more than generous propensities.”

There was no need of the look which Percival cast upon Sir Philip. He had sufficient ground, from his own knowledge, to authorize

the admonition he bestowed upon Charles, without adverting to the fresh proof of his lavish expenditure which he had received the previous evening.

Charles coloured with some annoyance; he was not pleased that Percival should become a witness to the reproof which conscience, nevertheless, told him he fully merited. Yet how little he guessed his uncle's thoughts—how little he suspected of what he was supposed guilty. The annoyance quickly passed away, as he turned gaily to Percival—

“My friend here has evidently been reading you a lesson out of his book, uncle. Now that really is not fair. I should have some one to say a good word for me—I am most willing to ask advice.”

“And yet you do not always follow it, Charles,” replied Percival, as if speaking the truth, and the whole truth. “When Sir

Philip and I spend a pleasant half-hour in discussing your faults, which of course we magnify to the utmost, you would be delighted to listen to the apologies that are drawn forth almost unwillingly, for your inexperienced youth and over-generous nature, which only looks on the bright side of things."

"Yes! but now you have gone so far, I will add," interrupted Sir Philip, as he raised himself in his arm-chair, and looked steadily but kindly on his nephew, "that there must be a change, Charles—I have loved you as my son; I still do love you tenderly; but I should wrong myself and you, were I any longer to conceal from you that I am extremely anxious concerning your future career."

At this instant Percival rose, as if with the intention of leaving the room, that he might in no way interfere with the confidential communication between the uncle and

nephew; but Sir Philip laid his hand upon him, saying that he was a friend of both, and that, as such, his presence was even desirable. He reseated himself, as if in obedience to Sir Philip's wishes more than his own.

“Charles, do not teach me to mourn over the blind affection that has encouraged in you those very errors I now earnestly deplore.”

The young man turned towards Percival in astonishment; but a look which the latter gave him, seemed to bid him trust all to him,—and Sir Philip continued:

“You know my love for Linstead is only excelled by my affection for you—but justice must even surpass that. I cannot leave all my possessions to become the prey of idleness. This house must not be the shelter of the lawless and unprincipled, of the

pleasure-seeker alone. As my heir, great responsibilities would devolve upon you. There would be many claimants upon your time and energies. I fear you would never satisfy them properly. You have too great a regard for the unauthorised wishes of your friends."

Again the colour rose to Seymour's cheek. He remembered how much implicated he was in the concerns of these very friends. He felt their honour was even dearer to him than his own. Was it possible that his uncle could be aware that he stood surety for Beverley to a large amount, and that many were also indebted to him for large sums. It was very unfortunate, that his friends were swayed by such generous impulses and such aristocratic tastes! Poverty was such pitiable meanness! Could his uncle know, indeed, that he had built upon his own prospects to save his friends from ruin!



No, the secret of the bond which he had given for 3,000*l.* as surety for Beverley, had surely never been divulged to Sir Philip. It was quite a private transaction! How conscience made a coward of him! Percival had promised concealment. Certainly he had himself entered into several speculations, and trusted to his Uncle's kindness to bring him out of debt; but why should his friends bear more than their share of blame? It was all a mystery to him.

These thoughts passed quickly through his mind as the old Baronet eyed him keenly yet kindly. He could not wholly exculpate himself. He could not ask for an open investigation, and explanation of his uncle's meaning. He knew the whole of his conduct could not bear exposure. "I am truly, truly sorry," he began—"I know I deserve all your reproaches. It seems as if

I had but poorly repaid your unvarying kindness, but circumstances which I cannot control must plead some excuse for me."

"Circumstances are your bane, Charles, they should not influence the straightforward conduct of a man of honour, and I further say that the honour of that man is very questionable who incurs a debt he has no means of defraying. A gambler may with one throw of the dice ruin himself or others; is he to be reckoned a man of honour?"

Percival trembled—the old man was touching upon dangerous ground, but he knew what he was about.

"Come now, Charlie boy" he continued so kindly that Seymour's heart smote him with redoubled force, "you must be advised by older and wiser men than yourself and your so-called friends. You are easily led away; you

must institute Percival your monitor, he has your interests at heart."

An unpleasant idea flashed across Seymour's mind as his uncle finished speaking. He saw himself for a moment ruined, disinherited, dishonour and poverty staring him in the face, the family estate passing away from him, and Percival himself sitting in his uncle's place. Oh! it was only a vision. He was his uncle's darling, his faults must be overlooked, his debts must be paid, his friends received into favour! In another moment he had knelt beside the old man, he had begged his blessing and forgiveness. As he took that venerable hand in his which had always been stretched out in constant kindness towards him, how bitterly he repented that he had ever caused a moment's uneasiness to one who was so dear to him! Vows were inwardly registered which he intended to fulfil, and promises

were given which calmed Sir Philip's perturbed spirit, shedding over the next few days a happier influence than had for some time been experienced.—Nor was Percival slow in expressing to both uncle and nephew his pleasure at the brighter aspect domestic affairs had assumed.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Friendships, to last, should be reciprocal, and founded on equality.

THE family party at the Glen had established themselves in their new abode, and the sacrifice once made, things began to assume a brighter aspect. Mrs Neville and Eleanor in particular looked forward to very happy days; and so did the young Mabel, as she sat for the last, the very last time in the small, neatly-furnished room which during the last eight years had been appropriated to her at Mayfield House, Twickenham. She was gazing listlessly upon the fire, and as

she rested a pair of very pretty feet upon a cross-stitch worked stool, the first production of a favourite little school-fellow, she looked as unlike the usually bright, happy Mabel Neville as possible. Her long hair was unplaited, and hung upon her shoulders, reaching in its wavy luxuriance below her waist; while her hands, which did not require any foil to set off their colour and shape, hung listlessly on her white dressing-gown, as if shrinking from the task of disentanglement which lay before them. Her dark blue eyes, usually beaming with animation, and most bewitching in their mirthful mischief, were dimmed by a tear, which a hasty movement of the hand dashed away ere it flowed over the soft fringed lid; even the dimples round the full, rosy lips were at rest, while all seemed sad within that would have found utterance in words. She was not alone, her

school-days' friend, the one being whom next to her mother and Eleanor she loved best in the world, was her companion.

Florence Trevelyan was the daughter of the eldest son of the Earl of Merivale, and inherited the pride and the aristocratic beauty for which her family was renowned. She was proud,—proud of her birth and her beauty ; nor were the lessons in the shape of example which she received at her own home, at all calculated to give her more just impressions as to the value which should be attached to earthly distinctions. But at Mayfield house, all instruction was based upon moral and religious principle, and she never parted from Mrs Dacre without feeling that she was returning to Molverley with an increased perception of right and wrong, of the real and the false in life. But such an invigorating influence could hardly be expected to exert



more than partial sway ; and when the granddaughter of the Earl of Merivale saw the deference which was paid to her stately mother, or listened to the tales which her elder sisters loved to relate of the homage they received and the admiration they excited, she would often sigh for the moment which would place her among the rank and fashion she inwardly worshipped. Youth, however, like age, is a leveller ; and while Mabel Neville was the only companion of her own age at Mayfield House, Florence returned her affection with all the warmth of an impulsive nature.

Mabel was simple-minded, and loving. True and earnest, she knew no timid shrinking—she was as courageous as she was guileless, and an intuitive delicacy of feeling caused her almost unconsciously to shun what she rather felt than knew to be wrong, while

her kind heart made her think well of all and every one around her. Yet her's was a character not easily read—possessing more depth and less frivolity, than might be imagined (by those who were but slightly acquainted with her) from the accompaniment of an extremely buoyant disposition. Those who draw delight out of trifling occurrences, are not necessarily shallow-minded. To the wise and the cultivated, on the contrary, no source is so insignificant but that, through its means, ideas of beauty and feelings of pleasure may be communicated, and gleams of thought and instruction shed abroad. The beauties of nature, which so many behold without contemplating, the powers of mind which are so frequently allowed to dwindle away in inaction, are to those who do not merely dream away their existence fruitful sources of pleasure and usefulness.

Young as she was, Mabel naturally looked upon all around as arrayed in very bright colours,—whether it were parents, sister, or friend, or the happy past, or the hopeful future. She saw but few imperfections in those she loved; to her memory, the past was but slightly over-shadowed, the future was without a cloud. Yet it was her fancy, not her judgment, that coloured all. Had she been of a reflective turn, the reality would have been more apparent, but her gaiety would have been less pleasing; she would have been a better oracle, but a less charming companion.

With no reserve, and without the uncomfortable “*mauvaise honte*” which is the sure companion of those who, naturally timid, are also self-devoted and self appreciating, Mabel had a thorough self-respect, and a spirit it might almost be termed of pride

which rose at the slightest word of undue familiarity, or of unasked-for interference. Yet she was ready to acknowledge her own errors, and prompt in excusing others. Indeed, to those who, like Mabel Neville, are as generous as they are impulsive, how much more delightful is it to find truth in goodness than in imperfection; to find that we ourselves are in the wrong, rather than those we love! Truth was the groundwork of Mabel's character; a quality of inestimable value, precluding, in later life, the warping of prejudice, and the subserviency of imitation, which destroy the charm of individuality: and earnestness carried out the truth, giving a zest, and ensuring at least a partial success, to every undertaking.

The two girls were on the eve of emancipation from school-room existence; they were henceforth to be, in the usual acceptance

of the word, their own mistresses; yet the moment to which at times each had looked forward with intense pleasure was now, on its near approach, contemplated by Mabel, at least, with very mingled feelings of sorrow and joy.

They had exchanged keepsakes—promises of eternal friendship, those not lightly or hurriedly made, but so often quickly broken vows, which young hearts imagine are stamped with an indelible impress, but which a few years, a few months, even, are often destined to deface, or eradicate.

Florence was tall and dark—her eyes were of that shape and colour which are generally designated as “fine eyes;” they did not sparkle with momentary mirth or melt in tenderness, but flashed with any strong emotion, and seemed as if appropriately placed beneath the slightly arched brow to

command rather than win the admiration they appeared to seek. The nose was somewhat too prominent a feature in the perfect oval face, but yet was faultless in its outline. Her smile was pleasant, though in repose the short upper lip described a curve, which Mabel, in her blind affection, thought was only characteristic of noble birth and proper self-appreciation; a less partial judge would have included the expression it gave to her face, amongst the various other evidences of 'hauteur' and self-esteem, which were nevertheless subdued by the salutary influence of Mrs Dacre's precept and example. Mr Trevelyan, Florence's father, was poor for the station in life in which he was born, and having educated a large family at considerable expense, was glad to entrust his youngest child, Florence, to this well-principled and estimable lady, who had

formerly been governess to his eldest daughters, and who received Florence as if she had been her child.

For three years Florence and Mabel had been companions at Mayfield House. They were of the same age, in that bright sweet time of youth over which but few memories can have cast a cloud, when the graceful blooming beauty of person, speaks of the refined yet vigorous mind, and when the snares and temptations of life lying hid from view, the charm of almost infantine innocence is still remaining.

Florence felt the value of Mabel's friendship, and could not but compare her character with that of her sisters and other companions, who, at her own home, had hitherto directed the current of her ideas. There are some whose nature must expand to a near and genial influence, and whose youthful affections



flow in a pure and radiant stream of friendship, for one of their own sex before they are destined to be engulfed in the turbulent waters of a feeling still more engrossing and more self-sacrificing. For such natures there is in store many a trial, before that lesson is learnt, which only experience can teach, before disappointment has chilled the heart, and the value of true friendship has been ascertained. But when at length the first fond confiding trust has been abused, and the friend of early youth has proved cold and unworthy, with what violence does the torrent of truth flow over the awakened mind, how willingly would that fatal knowledge be dispensed with which is gained at the expense of the purest of all earthly feelings!

It was late—the small well-regulated family at Mayfield had long retired to rest, but the two girls were unwilling to separate, though

they had for the hundredth time expressed the hopes and fears which indistinctly marked the future.

“ I am now going to a strange home, not to dear old Linwood, you know, Florence,” said Mabel, as she raised her eyes to her companion, who, in a more mirthful mood, was rallying her upon her unwonted abstraction.

“ If all these misfortunes had not fallen upon my father and mother, I do not think I should have felt so very unhappy. You will promise to write, Florence?”

“ Oh, so often, you will be tired of my letters, I think, dear Mabel!—how I do wish you were coming with me to Molverley! My sisters are so much older than I am—how often I shall long for a companion. But I am really looking forward with pleasure to the summer, to my first London season.”

“ I shall be quietly at home, you must give

me the fullest account of all you say and do, and all that is said to you, then I shall feel as if I were still with you."

"I hope I shall not forget all the good resolutions I have made in this quiet happy place! But do not be afraid, Mabel, that I shall ever forget you or love any one so well! No, no! I am determined not to follow my sisters' example. I am afraid they really are rather worldly-minded. They never care for any one who is not of their own set—who is not of the aristocracy—and they say that if they were not to marry those who are of high degree they should bring disgrace upon our family. I believe they really are sought for by all the old ugly rich men of title, and my eldest sister was engaged twice last season."

"Dear, dear Flo, what ideas you have!" at length Mabel interrupted—"Is there such a difference between ranks and stations, and

sets and fashions, as your sisters seem to wish you to believe? They cannot have had a friend, they cannot have loved any one as we do each other, or else the world, which you say they are so fond of describing to you, must have a strange influence upon those who are devoted to it. But, Florence, dear Flo! will it change you?"

"Oh, I promise, Mabel, that I shall never change! I shall only have to reflect for a moment upon our happy Mayfield days, to become instantly all that is good and delightful, like you. What should I have done here without you. It was a strange scheme to send me here for education, certainly."

"You say they have been happy days," replied Mabel, thoughtfully, "and indeed they have been. I feel, though I am going to be my mother and Eleanor's companion, as if I should be thrown on the wide world when I part from

you, and good Mrs Dacre—and now we are going to leave Linwood all will be so changed.”

“ You are certainly very unlike yourself to-night ! What a gloomy view you are taking of things ! I feel as if I ought to be melancholy too, when I look at your mournful countenance ! But I am afraid I am really only very happy, and very fond of you too, Mabel, of course.”

“ I have never, indeed, felt so serious and thoughtful. Now we are entering upon life in real earnest, all seems so changed ; does it not to you, Florence ? ”

“ At times, when I reflect—but, I confess, a very little reflection suits me extremely well, and I intend to enjoy myself thoroughly. My mother wishes me to be happy and gay—and after the London season we shall have the house full—you must come, Mabel. I cannot do without you. How charming it would be

if we could live together!—but tell me, are your father and mother very poor—are you going to live in a little village, between the curate and the apothecary? My poor Mabel!”

“Not quite that,” she replied, laughing. “I hear our home is to be a beautiful cottage on the estate of an old friend of our family’s.”

“The East Indian Mrs Neville mentioned in her last letter to you? I hope he will not be your only neighbour. Old, of course, he must be, as he has been twenty years at least in India, and I dare say he is as yellow as curry powder, and as hot-tempered as pepper itself.”

“I have never thought much about him, and your description does not incline me to wish to make his acquaintance,” and Mabel laughed heartily.

“I really cannot fancy you prim and methodical, teaching your little sisters by day, as you say you mean to do—and then dining

with an old bachelor-party at Hazelymph once or twice a month, whilst I shall be the gayest of the gay. I wonder why our lots are to be so differently cast."

"That question might puzzle greater and wiser people than you or I shall ever be, but we must not only look on one side of the picture."

"You may be certain," interrupted Florence, "that Mr Dalrymple will prove your bane, falling in love with you one moment, and loading you with bangles and Indian shawls, and the next, if you do any thing to displease him, asserting his supremacy of age and experience, as a reason for offering you very disagreeable counsel."

"Don't begin by making me discontented, Flo, for you know I am not very partial to interference, though I am glad of advice from those whose opinion I value, at present I



only feel very much obliged to Mr Dalrymple for giving us a home."

"There's nothing like gratitude, my dear Mabel, and I am grateful for every thing, particularly that at present there is no reason why I should be obliged to any one. Will you promise to tell me all your secrets. I do pity you; your father should not have met with misfortunes just when you wanted him to make your home a gay and happy one."

"Our lives will be very different, I am afraid, Florence; every day will bring you and the great world, the world of which you are, I think, beginning to be very fond, in closer contact, while I shall lead a quiet domestic life, which life, Mrs Dacre has always taken such pains to make us feel is the happiest, that I am sure there must be a diversity of opinions on the subject."

"Yes, and she always added, that the

great world is always full of snares, and that knowledge of the world is gained by learning some disagreeably hard lessons—I am quite prepared to encounter all difficulties.”

“ I think the world will go smoothly enough with you,” replied Mabel, as she looked fondly and affectionately at her companion. “ I should be so sorry if dear old Mrs Dacre’s old-fashioned precepts were to come true. It would be such fun to disappoint her ; to show her there is such a thing as friendship ! I really think she almost doubts the existence of such a quality, except in prose and poetry.”

The friends separated. They were to start early the following morning.

The morrow came, and with it all that Mabel dreaded, yet longed for, all that Florence looked forward to, with almost unalloyed pleasure. There was the farewell to the kind, dear Mrs Dacre ; with that, keen regret was

mingled. There was the kiss to the little rosy, bright-eyed companions, who looked up to Mabel and Florence as to beings of a different hemisphere. The last look at all around, their own little quiet rooms, the spring flowers on the window-sills, left as legacies of hope to a favourite companion—the large oak tree, whose shade had conduced to the formation of so many plans, and the demanding of so many confidences. Then came the warm shake of the hand to the kind old friendly domestics, another tearful good-bye, the last wave of the handkerchief with which Mrs Dacre dried her eyes, and the carriage which conveyed the two friends from Mayfield House was out of sight.

But the hardest task remained still to be fulfilled, as having travelled some distance together, Florence and Mabel must part. Kind, loving words are spoken in haste, and promises

are again and again repeated, which surely never can be broken ; the time of meeting again is fondly anticipated. A few moments more they are far apart, and life is about to present to each a different aspect from that under which it has hitherto been viewed.

## CHAPTER IX.

“ Congenial hope ! thy passion-kindling power,  
How bright, how strong, in youth’s untroubled hour ! ”

IN a few more hours Mabel was at the Glen. She had rushed into her mother’s and sister’s arms, while the little ones clung lovingly to her dress as she covered them with kisses. She had sought her father, and grieved for one moment over the altered aspect of his home, as she found him moving gloomily about a small, low, but comfortable-looking library, arranging the old, well-remembered books. He kissed her affectionately—he looked at her with pleasure. She had grown taller and

beautiful, he thought, yet his natural reserve came between him and the expression of his thoughts, and that little germ of sweet confidence between parent and child, he often, unconsciously, sighed to establish, was doomed again to wither, beneath the restraint which habit had established. In another moment Mabel was following her mother and Eleanor through the various small intricacies of their new home, pleased, delighted with all, though every now and then she sighed that it was not Linwood !

The Glen was built in the cottage style, and looked the perfection of comfort and unassuming beauty, with its low sloping roof, broad verandah, its trellis-work of roses and jessamine, and its background of woods, and glades, now bursting forth in all the fresh luxuriance of early summer. Beyond, in the far distance, rose the gable ends of the Haze-

lymph mansion, and a passing remembrance of her friend Florence's last night's conversation came rather disagreeably across Mabel's mind, as her mother pointed out the abode of Mr Dalrymple.

"Now, dear love, follow me," exclaimed Mrs Neville, gaily, as she hastily mounted the broad oak steps, with its comfortable covering of crimson carpet, "this is Eleanor's room, and this is your's, you will find many of your old favourite things here."

"How delightful, dearest mother! it is my room at dear old Linwood over again! I was afraid to ask, afraid to make any troublesome request. I thought my expressing wishes which you could not gratify would only distress you. How very kind of you."

"It is not my doing, love, you must thank Mr Dalrymple." Mabel looked surprised. It was a pleasant introduction to one, on whose



image she had hitherto dwelt in fancy rather unpleasantly.

He must be very kind-hearted, at least very sympathising, he must know how to please, she said, half to herself half to her sister, who was following her, as she flew from table to bookcase, through open doors, along the winding passages, until at length, rushing again down stairs, she found herself in a small octagon-room looking upon the garden, with a French window, and a flight of stone steps before it. Here the enchanter's wand seemed to have exercised its most bewitching power.

"And now you have come to the end of all the wonders," exclaimed Mrs Neville, as she entered at the moment, enjoying Mabel's child-like and joyful surprise.

"My dear, dear harp, Eleanor's pretty little piano, I thought we should never see again ;

the old marble table! so many favourites! Is this still good, kind, excellent Mr Dalrymple's work. How can we thank him, Eleanor?"

"He really has been very kind," said the elder sister, in a tone of something like apology for her former silence, "but——

"But what, Eleanor! This lovely garden! and what pretty chintz curtains! the baskets of flowers, too, I remember ever since I was a child, you are not half thankful or pleased enough. Oh! I suppose he is very old and ugly; poor Mr Dalrymple, and then it is more a duty than a pleasure to be grateful."

Mabel thought of Florence's sketch of the preceding evening. Eleanor pictured him to herself again, dark, still observant, as he sat by her mother's side seeming to penetrate her very thoughts. Her timid nature shrank from the investigation which Mabel in her

place would have boldly withstood. He had not made a favourable impression on Eleanor, she scarcely knew why.

“No, he is not either old or ugly, darling,” exclaimed Mrs Neville, laughing, while she followed Mabel’s quick movements with a mixture of maternal vanity and fondness. “How like she is growing to her poor aunt, the very height, the turn of the head, the graceful, yet somewhat dignified manner.” Thus soliloquized Mrs Neville, while the two girls had already forgotten, one the imaginary, the other the real, Mr Dalrymple in their delight at once more being together, and in so pretty a home.

Eleanor soon communicated to Mabel the overflowing happiness which was at her heart.

“I know it all, cannot I see you are happy in the sparkle of your eyes, but you are become more quiet, more demure. Is it

because you are thinking of leaving your home, our home for ever, Eleanor,—oh ! can you really leave us all, and never, never return.” A tear glistened in Mabel’s bright eye. She looked fondly, yet half reproachfully, at her sister.

“ Of course I can leave you all, dear as you are to me,” replied Eleanor, as if considering the full meaning of her words.

“ And Mr Seymour has wrought this wonderful change ?”

“ Is it very wonderful to you ?”

“ Yes ! and particularly unpleasant ; I shall have this charming room all to myself, I must admit Ada and Georgy for company’s sake.” Mabel endeavoured to hide, under a tone of gaiety, the pain she really felt at the thought of losing her sister, but it was a hard struggle. “ I have been obliged to school myself lately into all kinds of submission.

I have left Florence, Mrs Dacre, and now you are going to leave me," muttered Eleanor, "what is the meaning of this?"

"You have never felt an all-absorbing interest, Mabel. I sometimes tremble when I examine my own feelings. Charles Seymour has acquired a fearful dominion over me."

"Of course," replied the younger sister, "you think him perfection, and he considers you as an angel of beauty and goodness. Very natural. I love my mother, and Florence, and you, and many others, but I have no wish to think any human being faultless, as you probably consider Charles Seymour."

"I do not wish for your wisdom," exclaimed Eleanor laughing.

"Never fear, you may be certain there is no perfection in the world, and yet I believe I am not very hard-hearted; I remember once keeping a withered rose leaf a whole

week because the curate's son had given me the flower the day before he returned to school, and I am certain that I spent a long half-holiday in trimming up my old hat with blue ribbons, because Jemmy Liddle told me I looked so pretty in blue."

"You little vain thing! but there are some hopes for you yet, I see."

"But I have no idea of submitting to any one's whims and caprices except my own, and they are sometimes hard enough to bear; besides, how can one help seeing the ludicrous side of everything! How absurd I should feel if any one looked up to me with the reverence and admiration, I certainly could not reciprocate. Yet, I dare say, you are a little idol to Charles Seymour."

Eleanor looked the picture of happiness, but yet she called Mabel "foolish child," and said, "she did not wish to be an idol to any one,

and that Mabel had better not read any more romances, but study some useful science for the next two years."

"But I have done with study, and am now going to enjoy life, and the beauties of the Glen—and yet," added Mabel in a somewhat melancholy tone—"I see my life exactly before me when you are gone. I am to help mamma put all the furniture in order, poor dear mamma! and you know this means that we are never to know where our favourite arm-chairs or tables are to be found—then I shall teach Ada and Georgy, talk to papa, and sigh over his reserve and over the dust on the old library books, and—"

"And dine at Hazelymph once a fortnight, and be given to Mr Dalrymple two or three times a year," said Eleanor, laughing.

"Why to Mr Dalrymple? You and Florence have the same ideas."



“ Because he is your only neighbour, and he is rich and very disagreeable in my opinion, though I feel very ungrateful in saying so. The mere thought of him alarms me—I think I ought not to be happy, when I—”

“ But I am not timid! I quite long to see this terrific giant of your imagination.”

“ But he has seen so much of the world, and looks as if he knew exactly how every one should act, and feel, and think, and we are so young, and—I am so happy.”

“ Ah! you fancy the contrast must be painful to him! but why should he look down upon us because we are new to the world; and he has seen the bright side, and perhaps the dark side too. While he pities and despises me for my inexperience, shall I regret that he has already gained the knowledge I have certainly no wish to possess at present?”

“ Well, let us leave poor Mr Dalrymple

alone, for we have so many more interesting subjects to discuss!" exclaimed Eleanor.

"Yes! but he has certainly very good taste, for it suits mine exactly! (Now, talk to me of Charles Seymour, for he is, at least, one of your 'interesting subjects', I am certain.) I like flowers under the windows, and climbing up this trellis-work, so it appears does Mr Dalrymple. Now, Eleanor, make your confessions."

Eleanor availed herself of the permission. She could talk to Mabel—she could tell her anything—she could open her whole heart to her. There was something so sympathizing in Mabel's disposition! She understood an idea in its exact meaning—she appreciated it according to its exact value. She was not mirthful when her companion was serious, nor sad when she was gay. She did not moralize or lecture, when she should have soothed or

advised ; therefore, even those naturally reserved, as was Eleanor, found a secret satisfaction in bestowing their confidence upon her. For though to the stern realities of life, all are sooner or later compelled to attend, there are few, nevertheless, who are not alive to the charms of its poetry and romance, and thus was Mabel Neville !

Days, and even weeks, passed. The Neville family had established itself at the Glen, yet Mr Dalrymple had not paid one visit to his new tenants. He was absent from Hazelymph, and Eleanor's fear and Mabel's curiosity had well nigh subsided respecting him.

“ Why has he been so kind to us,” was the question the latter often asked herself as well as others, as day by day she learned to appreciate still more and more the delicate tact, and the refined taste which all his arrangements had exhibited. This question

Mrs Neville could have answered, but she was silent. She fancied that in Herbert's heart existed still the undivided memory of one who was the strong link between the past and the present, and that while there was certainly room for censure, there was also much cause for pity respecting him.

It was evening, in the beautiful month of June—the reign of summer was fully established. The calm soft air waved over luxuriant masses of woods, and light green corn fields, and all nature seemed rejoicing in its own beauty.

Charles Seymour had left his uncle recovered from his temporary indisposition in the care of Percival, and with his friend Beverley was spending some days at the Glen. With his ever peculiar talent of fascinating, Beverley had succeeded in making friends, and even becoming intimate with every member of the family—but Mabel

was naturally his most particular attraction, nor was she at all less alive, in her turn, to the graces and animation of his person and manner. It was very pleasant always to have a companion in riding, walking, or gardening, or even teaching Ada and Georgy, for Mr Beverley never knew what 'ennui' was; and the thorough simplicity of the life at the Glen charmed his fancy. Charles was so happy too, he almost envied him his position of bridegroom elect. Not that Beverley had the slightest wish to captivate the beautiful Mabel. He liked to engross her sweet smiles, and earnest conversation, like all selfish, worldly, and idle men, because he had no higher object of interest.

There was something certainly irresistibly attractive about her rather nonchalante manner, and her absence of all guile, and even, in some degree, in her disrespect for those convention-

alisms, which make each scene in the great gay hollow world only a repetition of the one that preceded it. It was a life of liberty instead of the slavery to which he was accustomed, and Beverley fully appreciated it, particularly as he had been rather successful in his late gambling speculations at Ascot. All seemed to smile upon him.

“No, I cannot refuse you anything, Miss Neville,” he exclaimed, as, kneeling by Mabel’s side, he was assisting her, rather awkwardly it was true, to bring a very fragrant but rebellious wreath of honeysuckles and china roses into something like order.

“What a bad gardener you do make, and how very ungrateful I am to you for all these wonderful exertions.” Mabel looked up in his face with her mirthful mischievous smile. She had thrown off her straw hat, and her hair, which was very bright, and of that rich golden

colour so deservedly admired by the old painters, waived upon her fair young brow, while a brilliant hue of health and animation flushed her cheek. She was so engrossed in her occupation, and in rallying her companion upon his awkwardness, that she did not hear the sound of approaching footsteps, but a shadow fell upon the turf before her, and in another moment Charles Seymour was at her side, introducing Mr Dalrymple. She frankly shook hands with him, while he for a moment gazed upon her without uttering a word. He looked more than ordinarily sad and stern; there was certainly nothing prepossessing in his manner, Mabel thought, but she said quickly, "I have longed, so often longed to see you, Mr Dalrymple, and thank you for all your kind forethought; you have made us so happy here."

"He could not, at the moment, summon



courage, hard and stern as he was in appearance, to break the spell Mabel's manner, look, and voice had thrown around him. It was not Mabel Stewart who stood before him—yet he was strangely and painfully reminded of her. As for the young girl herself, she looked at him with surprise; and as she remembered Eleanor's description of him, a slight, and to her, unusual fear, came across her as he stood by her side, tall, dark, motionless, yet gazing with earnest eyes upon her face. The next moment he roused himself, and addressed to her some common-place remark, while she thought him rather old, and very careworn-looking (though certainly he had been handsome) and unquestionably rude and odd in manner. In short, he made a disagreeable first impression, and he knew it. He would have been glad had it been otherwise. He might as well have been a mere foolish

youth, blundering and blushing on his first entrance into society, instead of a man who had seen the world, and lived a life of feeling and experience. But so it often happens, that real worth, strength, and greatness of mind, put forth at first sight no claim to appreciation, whereas the mere senseless worldling has often flowery words at his command, and wins golden opinions, from tact and self-possession alone.

Mabel mistook Dalrymple's silence and abstraction, for stupidity or contempt. For the first time she seemed to dislike being under obligation to him. She was disappointed; it had been hitherto so delightful to feel grateful. Beverley came to her assistance.

"You do not know what an idol you are here, Mr Dalrymple, and to Miss Mabel Neville in particular," he said rather mischievously, as he watched the unmistakeable expression of

Mabel's countenance. "Hitherto you have been but an imaginary being; I am glad you are arrived in your own person to hear your own praises echoed on all sides."

"It must always be pleasant to gain Miss Neville's approbation," returned Dalrymple, drily, and somewhat haughtily, as he eyed Beverley with a glance of displeasure, "but she must be the best judge whether she has, or has not sadly overrated my merits." He turned to Mabel, conscious, as was indeed the case, that she was comparing him, much to his disadvantage, with the young, handsome, aristocratic-looking Hastings Beverley, while his old feeling of distrust of all that was fair and beautiful, came back to mar the pleasure he inwardly felt, as he gazed upon Mabel.

"All is indeed so charming, so very lovely here," she said gaily, "that I am glad you are come to claim your own—these sunsets

and woods, and river, and clouds, I always consider your's, Mr Dalrymple, and until you bequeath them to us by word of mouth, I feel we have been enjoying a pleasure to which we were not entitled."

There was an absence of all shyness in Mabel's manner produced by a total want of self-importance and self-love, which never failed to bring the minds of those with whom she conversed, in close communion with her own, and even Dalrymple was not quite proof against the pleasing influence.

"I am glad to find you appreciate what is indeed irresistibly beautiful, but so few are contented with such pure enjoyment, and at your age particularly, Miss Neville, most require excitement to interest, and flattery to animate."

"Excitement ! flattery ! what words of fearful import," exclaimed Mabel, laughing.

“ I hardly know if I understand their real meaning, certainly not from experience.”

“ Miss Neville, you cannot answer either for yourself or others,” said Beverley, “ or at least if you can now, a very short time will teach a different lesson. I am sure you will not promise me that this seclusion will always suit you.”

“ Certainly not. I should enjoy, even now, a great deal of society, a great deal of gaiety. I enjoy all and everything, but I hope you do not think I must necessarily sigh for it,” she replied, with a bright smile, which the misanthrope, ‘*malgré lui*,’ thought had a little coquetry in it; “ but at present I am quite happy if only you will help me to tie up these flowers, and not be so very impatient, Mr Beverley.”

“ Nor so very self-opinionated, you may add ; you must let me have it all my own way ;

I am sure you are tiring yourself," and Beverley cast a look of entreaty on Mabel, which however had not the effect of making her desist from her labours.

"No, no! I am teaching you the art of ornamental gardening, and you must be submissive; you must first of all fancy yourself perfectly ignorant even of the rudiments. Is that to be reckoned possible? I am going to allow you to weigh your own merits."

Beverley could have listened for hours to Mabel; he could have waited upon her, assisted her, he could have submitted to all the inconvenience of stooping down amidst briars and bushes, and tying up tiny rose-shoots that would always break when they were intended to bend—he could have done all this, and felt himself amply repaid by Mabel's thankless sallies, if only he had been alone with her—if only Mr Dalrymple

had shown the least inclination to depart. But the latter seemed riveted to the spot more from a species of fascination than by any share he took in the evening's occupation, except, Mabel thought, to chill the warm bright air with his dignified and almost stately presence. She was determined not to stand in awe of him, as she was sure so many had done before her. Her disposition led her to a resolute attempt at overcoming obstacles; Eleanor's to a quiet submission.

“ We fully appreciate these,” she said, addressing Dalrymple, as her eye rested upon the conservatory filled with choice beauties. “ Now I really am very much obliged to you, Mr Beverley; you have been of the greatest service to me, though I have appeared so ungrateful; let us gather some of these geraniums.”



In a moment Dalrymple was at her side, offering to carry the basket which hung upon her arm as she moved towards the greenhouse.

“ You have inherited your mother’s taste for flowers,” he said kindly. “ I am so glad you like them.”

His voice sounded less stern, but she did not feel inclined to give him the slight trouble (it might be a gratification) of assisting her — indeed the basket was already in Beverley’s possession. She did not guess the crowd of thoughts that passed through his mind, while she formed her own hasty opinion. “ He has evidently lived too much alone, poor man,” she said to herself. “ I hope he will not expect us to enliven him *very* often, notwithstanding he has been so kind to us.” On this idea Mabel still dwelt. She had not, she feared, sufficiently expressed

her thanks—it would have been so easy to repeat them, to any other person than Mr Dalrymple ! Now it was a duty she owed herself not to forget her obligation to him. She little knew how Dalrymple's heart refused the praise she bestowed, how painfully her thanks vibrated on his ear. He could not divulge the secret, and openly confess the motive which had conduced to his apparent benevolence and generosity. At length the geraniums were gathered, and the basket was full, and again taken under Mr Beverley's protection ; Mabel was prepared to go homewards, and Mr Dalrymple, refusing an invitation to dine at the Glen, took his departure ; Mabel rejoicing that it had not been his fate to remain, and that of Mr Beverley to spend a solitary evening at Hazelymph !

## CHAPTER X.

“Pour trouver quelque agrément dans la société de ses amis, et de ses connaissances, il faut ne rien désirer, se contenter de peu, savoir supporter beaucoup.”

WHILE days passed only too quickly and happily at the Glen, and while both Seymour and Beverley felt the allotted term of their stay would be necessarily of too short duration, Lady Florence Trevelyan, Mabel's dear friend, was being initiated into the life she was destined henceforth to lead. The Earl of Merivale has been already described as sleepy and good-natured, enjoying the possession of his comfortable arm-chair at Molverley during the Easter recess, instead

of chaperoning his wife and daughters to London balls and dinner-parties. It is necessary to introduce the reader to the Countess and the ladies Matilda and Honoria.

Lady Merivale was a most affectionate but worldly mother; in this respect she resembled most who are of the gay world of fashion, and many who move in a less exalted sphere. Even Mrs Neville, in general right judging and discerning as she was, would willingly, had opportunity offered, have seen her own daughters shine in that brilliant society of which Lady Florence Trevelyan was already described as being the ornament of the season. Lady Merivale was also handsome, proud, weak, laying the greatest stress upon trifles, a worshipper of fashion and rank. Her husband had lately succeeded to the title. Her two eldest daughters were in

their own opinion, and in that of their mother, perfectly well-bred, and perfectly fashionably dressed; in that of the world (but it might have been mistaken) also perfectly heartless. They energetically assisted their mother's endeavours to procure them suitable marriages,—the word suitable applying not to the possession of intellectual, or even moral qualities in the object sought, but rather to the rank and wealth which would ensure a high position in society.

To those who are biassed by certain insurmountable prejudices, it may seem strange that in regard to that search which we are assured is the main object of maternal solicitude, no previous admonitions, either general or particular, are wont to be considered of any moment. Year after year afford proofs of irretrievable errors in conscience and in judgment being followed by

the total shipwreck of domestic happiness, but still the same phantom lures the ambitious towards the fatal goal.

Lady Matilda was more proud than vain; Lady Honoria too vain not to be extremely silly. In person Matilda was of the same style as Florence, though of inferior beauty. She moved with an imperial air, which was particularly remarkable when she threw open the door of the saloon in her father's London mansion in Belgrave square, and entered, the daughter of the Earl of Merivale. There was the conscious possession of a fine, and extremely well-dressed figure, small mouth, and even teeth. The nose was rather too much inclined to come in contact with the chin, yet harmonized wonderfully with a pair of large black round eyes. A profusion of perfectly black hair drawn off the face and twisted into a Grecian knot at the back of

the head, displayed the aristocratic proportions of the ear, and the turn of a slender, long white throat. She was young, yet looked any age between twenty and forty ; there was neither brightness in her complexion nor in her smile ; and the air of condescension with which she endeavoured to mask her pride, might have belonged to an ancient Dowager.

Lady Honoria was smaller and less imposing-looking, extremely pretty, and very conceited. Lady Matilda fancied she captivated at first sight ; her younger sister, on the contrary, was always fearful of not pleasing,—her vanity tending to a constant and troublesome examination of the looks, words, and manner of those whose admiration she desired. She had rather have been worshipped by a peasant, than passed by with mere casual notice by a peer of the realm. Her desire was to create a series of sensations without in



any way gratifying her troop of devotees by more than a languishing look and a good-natured simper. Yet she had a certain degree of romance in her composition, which led her to fancy herself always slightly in love. Her light quick step moved upon the soft carpet of her luxurious new London home, while her large blue eyes were in general more intent upon the pretty reflection which was visible in many a surrounding mirror, than upon any employment which would have been less attractive and more useful. Indeed, during the London season, the constant attempt to repair, during the short day, the injury done to personal beauty by the long nights, of necessity precluded any exertion more powerful than the reading a fashionable work, or the choosing a becoming head-dress.

At Merivale House frivolity was the reigning

deity, and ennui the presiding genius. In the education and management of her daughters the Countess had followed the plan which had been found so advantageous in regard to herself, her youthful beauty having secured the prospect of a fine park in Cumberland, a splendid mansion in Belgrave square, and the Earl of Merivale, who was handsome and easy-tempered.

Certainly the Earl had not yet made his appearance who was equivalent to Matilda's eyes and forehead, and five feet seven of aristocratic elegance, nor had even the second son of a Duke asked for more than a smile from Honoria's blue eyes and cherry lips. But now that Lady Florence was to be introduced (which was not a subject of congratulation to her elder sisters), the ladies Matilda and Honoria were secretly advised to lower their expectations, for Florence was

by far the most strikingly beautiful of the three.

“Really, my dear Florence, this correspondence must cease, sooner or later,” said the Countess one morning, in a tone of languid distress. Florence looked up from a long letter she had been eagerly perusing while waiting for her mother and sisters, as one by one they sauntered leisurely into the breakfast-room at their usual late hour, soon after their arrival for the season at Merivale House.

“Do you really wish me to give up writing to Mabel, Mamma? Mabel! so good, so kind, and so very much attached to me?”

“School-days’ friendship, my dear; very romantic, and very charming while it lasts, but that, you know, cannot be for long.”

“Why not, Matilda,” replied Florence, rather alarmed at the prophetic tone assumed

by her elder sister, who had chimed in with the Countess's views.

"Because nothing so perfectly unnatural and irrational, so totally incompatible with our position in life, can last long; consider, we are now daughters of the Earl and Countess of Merivale."

"Matilda is perfectly right,—I respect her judgment," returned the Countess. "Your friendship began when you were girls together, and you had comparatively no knowledge of the relative classes of society. Of course you can be very good-natured and very civil when you meet, without being confidential—but when are you likely to meet?"

"Oh, this summer, dear Mamma; Mabel and I have promised ourselves this pleasure—pray Matilda remember this." Poor Florence had an intuitive idea and dread that in the

end her elder sister's influence would undermine the constancy of her attachment to Mabel.

"Dear Florence! there is something so romantic in friendship," said little lady Honoria, as she smoothed the long fair ringlets that fell over her face and neck, and leant a very pretty hand and arm sparkling with massive gold bracelets upon an ebony table. "Is Mabel really a friend? How very delightful it must be to have a real friend! One only reads of such romance now—how nice it must be to have some one to whom one can confide all one's secret sorrows. Do not take poor Florence's friend away from her." Though simple, Lady Honoria was really good-natured.

"How can you be so absurd, Honoria! you should never have any secret sorrows. If you were not always fancying yourself

in love, you would not have any," returned Lady Matilda, drawing up her proud throat, and taking up the newspaper, as she moved with stately step towards the breakfast table.

"Matilda and I perfectly agree, my dear Florence—it is only through the medium of such acquaintances as those you have unluckily formed at Mrs Dacre's (I know she is a very good woman), and living a monotonous country life, that any feelings so perfectly irrational, ridiculous, and inconvenient as friendship or love are called into existence."

"Oh! dear Mamma," lisped Honoria, "indeed you are mistaken."

"No, my love, I repeat what I have often said,—if you wish to succeed in the world you must not give way to any romantic folly; if a girl sighs and looks dismal, all

her prospects are marred at once ; a composed, cheerful demeanour, is far more becoming in every way. It is so extremely injurious to beauty to feel anything very sensitively ! besides, it is extremely undignified.”

Florence could not help smiling, though she checked her mirth, as she perceived that her mother was perfectly serious.

“I was always, I confess, against your going to Mrs Dacre’s house ; still more against your continuing there after your grandfather’s death. There was some slight excuse before that. But the Earl, who was just recovering from an attack of gout, felt out of spirits, and declared when Honoria left the school-room that nothing should induce him to begin again with a French, German, and English governess for you alone. I was obliged to give a reluctant consent—but



Florence, dear, you are reasonable I am sure about Miss Neville."

"You will not have time to write very often to your dear friend," laughingly interposed Lady Honoria, "if you have so many calls upon your time as I have. I have been anxious to have a few more singings, but really the days are so short."

"Your intimacy need not be discontinued all at once, Florence. You can answer Miss Neville's letter politely, even kindly. Of course politeness can never lower any one—just the contrary; you should be particularly careful to avoid anything like 'brusquerie' in society,—at the same time be as sincere as is compatible with circumstances."

This species of advice was not new to Florence. She knew her mother's theory, and it sometimes grieved her to think that if

Mrs Dacre were right, her mother must be wrong. Indeed, her conscience told her that all was wrong at Merivale House,—but how could she set it right? It was much easier to follow in the train of others than to mark out a new path for herself. That would be ridiculous ; besides she had no wish to do so. She might, and always would, think of Mabel with affection.

“ Very well, Mamma,” she replied quietly, “ but indeed I should be very sorry to hurt Mabel’s feelings—you do not know what promises we made to each other—and because she is poor, and I am your daughter, and am going to mix in the gay world, and—”

“ What folly you are talking ; Florence,” exclaimed Matilda, half angrily ; “ I really do hope you will not bring new notions into the family, but conform to Honoria’s and my ways, and my mother’s wishes. Indeed, I dare say

you will very soon learn, to look upon life with the same eyes that we do—you are only a child as yet,” she added more kindly.

“I can only say that my friend Mabel is quite as lady-like, and looks as much an Earl’s daughter, as either you or I, or Honoria,” and Florence coloured with annoyance.

“I have not the least wish to hurt Miss Neville’s feelings, my dear,” said the Countess, in a pacifying tone. “If she has really the good sense you give her credit for, she will very soon herself relieve you from any embarrassment with regard to her acquaintance. Besides, she, of course, will lead a quiet country life. I dare say she will make a very good match in her own station. It is so essential to preserve a proper distinction as to rank where it is possible, though there is in these days an unfortunate levelling spirit which I do not remember in my youth.”

“Very well, Mamma,” added Lady Matilda, “only think if Honoria and I had not respected our own position. It certainly was a difficult task at first, but, by degrees, those who were so unfortunate as to be misled by what I must call blind and senseless admiration, have discovered the real distance that separates us,—and I hope Florence will learn by our experience.”

“I assure you it is a very distressing duty, dear Florence,” said the pretty Honoria, “to give pain to others who love you hopelessly, and whose affections you cannot return. . They are not to blame, poor creatures,” and Lady Honoria left the breakfast-room with a sigh.”

“Well, now, my dear Florence, I must tell you I have several invitations for you. My particular friend the Duchess of Derwentwater, dear Lady Marsdale, and many

others, have begged me to introduce you to them. Indeed, I do not think I shall have much difficulty," and the Countess glanced with complacency on her daughter's youthful beauty, a counterpart of her own in her juvenile days.

"There certainly could be no harm in Miss Neville paying Florence a visit once a year at Molverley Manor," said Lady Matilda, who lingered at the door of the breakfast-room, instead of following her sister as usual, in order to come to her mother's assistance should Florence plead too earnestly. "Of course such a visit would never be returned; that could not be expected."

"I am afraid it would only do Miss Neville harm," replied the Countess with a very wise look. "I am afraid it would give her tastes which she would be unable to

gratify at her own home ; but if Florence wishes it very much—" she added, good-naturedly.

"I hardly think Mabel would like to come, unless she felt that she was not invited merely on sufferance. I assure you Mabel is as proud as either of my sisters, though in a different way."

"Well, my dear, I only hope you have not made any absurd promises, for you must positively break them, though I will not insist upon your not writing occasionally. Matilda, have you accepted Lady St Cloud's offer to chaperone you to-night? I cannot possibly, you know, take out three daughters."

"No, Mamma," said Lady Matilda, peevishly. "It is a great pity, I think, to introduce Florence this year ; one year more or less could not have signified at her age. She might really have remained one more season

at her friend Mrs Dacre's, and have made her appearance at the county ball in the autumn, when we shall have a large party at Molverley. Miss Neville might even be invited there."

"My dear Matilda, you know that I have often told you that you must all have an equal chance, and Florence is past eighteen. It is certainly very unfortunate that we cannot find a "parti" exactly suited to you."

"The fact is, Mamma, I really think it is timidity which prevents those whose rank and position are nearly equal to ours, and indeed quite equal in some cases, from coming forward. I believe we are always supposed to be proud," and Lady Matilda smiled benignly; "but I have no wish to be reckoned so superior to the rest of the world. I am sure Honoria is often positively too friendly and intimate with some who would never



presume to make either of us an offer. Have I not often told you so?" continued Matilda, who by this time had reached the morning room in which she and her sister had been in the habit of spending part of their short day."

"Yes, indeed, you have, and I have sometimes regretted following your advice," replied Honoria with a sentimental and conceited air. "It is so difficult to keep exactly in the straight line—a little encouragement is so quickly followed by an 'empressement,' from which I am obliged to shrink without giving more pain or offence than it is possible to avoid."

"Honoria, I wish you had accepted Lord Slingsby's offer last year. His father and elder brother have both died since the last London season, and you would have made room for Florence nicely."

"I really could not, dear Matilda," replied

the little blonde, as she took a piece of embroidery out of her ivory workbox, and, reclining upon her own particular deep-cushioned sofa, began to examine her shades of rose-coloured floss silk; "Would you have wished me to marry a man for whom I really had no sentiment? how could we have walked through the vale of life together without some similarity of feeling."

"There is such a splendid music-room at Slingsby Castle, Honoria," continued Lady Matilda, as if pursuing her own train of thought, without heeding her sister's reply; "I believe the floors are all inlaid with different kinds of marble; there is a picture-gallery, a fine piece of water, and—"

"Really, Matilda," exclaimed Florence, laughing, "one would fancy you were enumerating Lord Slingsby's good qualities, instead of his possessions. I dare say he

was very unprepossessing, old, cross—hump-backed, perhaps.”

“No, not exactly; but I could not love him.”

Lord Slingsby was half-witted, and extremely plain. Even the Countess had not pressed his suit.

“Now at Lady St Cloud’s you meet no one, positively not a creature of one’s own set. I do not wish to become intimate with her; besides, she is such a little flirt that she engrosses all the attention. I wonder how she can be thought graceful. She has no ‘tournure;’ and that little manner some think so pretty and animated, I consider quite silly and so undignified.”

“But, dear Matilda, few are so very magnificent and so perfectly self-possessed as you are,” returned Florence, rather maliciously.

“I have no wish to be otherwise. If you

do not maintain your own dignity, you will find your value diminished in the eyes of the world."

Florence did not reply, but she silently contrasted the opinions she heard discussed with those she knew good Mrs Dacre advocated. She was too new to the life she was about to lead to feel perfectly at home among such utter worldliness and frivolity. She felt lonely and unhappy as she thought of those pleasant days past, when Mabel's friendship, her lively conversation, her kindly mischief, and real good nature, were a source of such true pleasure. But she knew too well the force of the influence to which she was subject, and folding up Mabel's long letter that she still held in her hand, she prepared to inspect several articles of dress which awaited her approval.

"Now you are beginning life in earnest,

my dear child," said her mother, as she followed her to her room, "Much depends upon yourself. You must beware of introductions to any who are not 'des notres.' I hope you will not waste your time as your sisters have done, for they, I must say, have set you a shocking example. A girl like you attracts speedy notice;" and giving her daughter a kiss of approbation, the Countess retreated to her writing-table; Florence to collect her somewhat bewildered ideas, and examine her first ball-dress.

That night Lady Florence Trevelyan made her first appearance in the gay world. Young, beautiful, and high-born, it greeted her with a smile which set at instantaneous defiance all the experience, the precepts, the admonitions she had received from others, as well as the secret misgivings of her own heart. All seemed bright and real as her dark eyes

flashed with the consciousness that admiration was no less her due than her actual possession. She felt that she had but to choose, and the best of earth's gifts would be at her feet.

It was comparatively early the following morning when Lady Florence rushed into her elder sister's room to unburden her heart of its load of delight, and give an account of the preceding evening, for Lady Matilda had after all accepted the chaperonage of little Lady St Cloud.

"I cannot understand how you can ever grow tired of dancing, Matilda, and yet I have often heard you say that you have returned home wearied and out of spirits. I never was so happy in my life, and Mamma said that I created quite a sensation," said Florence, laughing.

"Pray don't expect me to encourage your

vanity," replied her sleepy sister. "Honorina is so vain that she is miserable if she does not attract every one's attention; but I wish you had not disturbed me so early—I am sure the day is long enough."

"But I could not sleep; all is so new and so delightful to me. I had certainly no idea how excessively pleasant it is to be admired. I believe it is only the old and ugly who preach against the vanities of the world, after all."

"Oh, you will be tired of them soon, like others, if you go year after year to the same balls, the same places, and meet the same uninteresting people."

"How can you call people uninteresting, Matilda, who are devoted to you merely on first acquaintance. Mamma introduced me to so many—Lord Drayton, rather deaf; Lord Peter Feversham, son of the Marquis



of Callowmere, very rich indeed, Mamma said, and I thought him so pleasant and handsome. I think he is engaged to Lady Catherine Douglas."

"Oh! of course I know them all, Florence," returned Matilda rather peevishly. "Lord Drayton proposed to me the first year I was introduced; he wanted to marry some one of real rank, being only a new-made peer, and therefore I refused him. I don't think Lord Peter looks very distingué though he has a classical outline of features, and is agreeable enough—but as to Lady Catherine Douglas (and here Matilda looked very mysterious) I longed to tell him that she has the worst temper in the world, besides being a very great flirt."

It had been whispered that Lord Peter Feversham had excited an unusual interest in Lady Matilda's not over-sensitive heart,—

but that did not at the present moment come within the catalogue of her confessions.

“But I long to tell you of an adventure last night, Matilda—really quite an adventure. As I was leaving the ball-room, feeling so happy, and wishing to-morrow night had arrived, Sir Frederick Maypole, who was handing me to the carriage, was suddenly called away to his sister, who was fainting from the extreme heat.”

“She only hoped to create a sensation, Florence,—how can you be so easily taken in?” interrupted Lady Matilda.

“Well, I was left alone for a few moments, for accident had separated me from Mamma; and feeling almost frightened in the great crowd, I looked round for some protection,—when suddenly a gentleman whom I had not hitherto observed came up to me, and with the most enchanting

bow in the world, so courteous, and yet so respectful, offered me his arm to lead me to the carriage. I turned round to thank him for his kindness just as we passed under a chandelier. He was so striking-looking, tall, dark, rather melancholy, a kind of beau-idéal of Mabel's and my dreams !”

“Your's and Mabel's, my dear Florence, what are you thinking of? but who is he?” exclaimed Lady Matilda, with more interest in her manner than she had hitherto shown.

“I have no idea,—I could not of course ask him; but he heard my name. I shall never be content till I see the interesting unknown again.”

“Why, you are quite romantic! What would not Honoria give to be the heroine of your little adventure!”

“He was so unlike all the others to whom I had been introduced,—they were very pleasant, and danced beautifully, oh it was all very charming—but this magnificent incognito looked as if he could not condescend to so frivolous an amusement. He felt conscious of superiority to me and every one else—yet he was so respectful, so courteous!”

“Who can he be! Perhaps Lord Henry St George, returned from foreign service; perhaps a foreign prince; had he on a great many orders?”

“I had not time to observe; I only thought his countenance with all its sadness had an expression in it that pleased me extremely. He evidently knew I was a novice.”

“That proves that you are scarcely yet fit for entering the world, Florence; I told Mamma so—you should never appear as if you felt

any deficiency, or as if anything were strange to you. Nothing should take you by surprise."

"Oh! but I know I am ignorant, Matilda! I am not perfect enough to wish for no support, no control." A recollection of Mrs Dacre's advice had come at this moment [to Florence's assistance.

"Well, my dear, you are very childish, these ideas have been fostered by your simple-minded companions, and probably also by some of Miss Burney's old-fashioned novels; you must give them up. Did Lord Peter Feversham say he was going to Lady Angus's this evening?"

"No, for Lady Catherine Douglas is not going, I heard," replied Florence, rather maliciously.

"Oh! it is of no importance to me.

Poor man, how I shall pity him if he makes that absurd match. Now Florence do leave me, it is getting late, and I shall never be dressed for that stupid *déjeuner* I promised to go to."

"Poor Mabel," soliloquized Lady Florence as she left her sister's room. "I am really so sorry for her—but what can be done? as Mamma says. We do move in different spheres—this kind of friendship cannot last. It was almost a pity we ever became so intimate. It would be quite impossible for her to mix in our society, though she is in reality as much fitted for it as any one of us. I am afraid I shall hardly have time to write even once a week if I go out very much. Drawing-rooms, Court balls, *déjeuners*! I wonder whether I shall ever see that handsome unknown again. As Matilda says, he must be a foreign prince—did he

think me handsome,—how I should like to know !”

Lady Florence Trevelyan had in the meantime reached her sisters' morning room, in which she had appropriated a corner to herself, and drawing a chair to a writing-table, she was in the act of sitting down to make some excuse to her friend Mabel for her silence, past and future, when she received a message from the Countess, begging that she would immediately go to her, for the purpose of giving her opinion upon the setting of some diamonds in which she was to appear at the approaching Drawing-room.

Post-time came inopportunately in the midst of numerous engagements, and the following day produced its own particular interruptions. Florence began to feel more and more the truth of her mother's and sister's assertions



that to keep up an intimacy with Mabel would be quite impossible. At the end of a week she despatched a few hasty lines apologizing, excusing herself, but assuring her that she was still her affectionate friend.

## CHAPTER XI.

“Why has Time a pace  
That seems unequal in our mortal race?”

It was the last evening that Seymour and his friend Beverley were to spend at the Glen.

Seymour felt that duty, if not inclination, recalled him to Linstead, for Sir Philip was still indisposed; while Beverley—who had private reasons for keeping in retirement—instead of sauntering as was his custom through a London season, had unfortunately no good excuse for remaining with the Nevilles after Seymour's departure.

A riding party had been arranged, as usual;

consisting of Eleanor, Mabel, and the two friends.

It was to be the last, and the pleasantest of all! The day had been so sultry, that the mere breath of the evening air—as it swept across the forest, bearing with it the fragrance of honeysuckle, gorse, heather, and the happy insect-hum—was of itself sufficiently exhilarating to have produced a change from gloom to brightness, even in the most apathetic. But, in the present party, no such change was required. Each thought, if there existed so fabulous a feeling as happiness, it was now to be experienced, diffused through the medium of each gratified sense, and by the consciousness of giving, as well as receiving pleasure. Yet in each, the sensation was different, modified by individual nature, and by circumstances.

Eleanor's was calm and serious, yet most intense; while Mabel's arose from almost pure

physical enjoyment alone, heightened, it was true, by the pleasure she could not conceal from herself she took in Beverley's society. She was in general enthusiastic in her admiration of beauty, in art or nature; yet, as Beverley rode by her side, green glades, majestic trees, blue mountain glimpses, and sparkling streamlets, were well nigh overlooked. She so thoroughly enjoyed his merry laugh, his good-humoured joke, the zest with which he related his many adventures! It was so pleasant to look upon his bright countenance, to her idea, unmasked by any experience of care. To her present enjoyment there was but one foil—"It could not last," she thought. To-morrow he would be gone—how she should miss him! how dull her daily routine would be; how uninteresting the teaching her little sisters! how grave and dark the old library would look. Eleanor would be cheered by

Charles Seymour's letters! How dull their rides would be in future!

Beverley seemed to have guessed what was passing through her mind, during a very short silence, as Eleanor and Seymour were riding on before.

He turned towards her—"There is a very tyrannical law, certainly, Miss Neville, which decrees that all happy moments are to pass quickly away, while anxiety lengthens hours into days. I feel I shall never be so happy again as I have been lately." He spoke truly. He felt, to a certain degree, changed—improved; he was susceptible to influences, good and bad; the last week or two had had a wholesome, though it would necessarily be a transient, effect upon his character.

Mabel blushed, as she felt his remark gave her pleasure.

"I suppose you mean to be complimentary,

Mr Beverley ; and I am really very much obliged for the share you intend I should take in your pretty little speech ; but I suppose I am wiser than you, for I know that no very pleasant moments last long—I know that they are not to be trusted.”

Beverley thought that he was not quite so unacquainted with the mysteries of life as his fair companion supposed him to be, or as she indeed was herself ; but he said nothing. He inwardly sighed, as he felt that an immeasurable distance removed her in her perfect innocence and simplicity from himself. On first acquaintance he had wished to interest Mabel. He felt he had succeeded, perhaps even beyond his wishes or expectations—prudence had long advised him to beware, and he had heeded her warnings, though with more difficulty than he fancied he should experience.

“I am, unfortunately, such a wanderer upon the fair surface of life, (it really has a very fair surface at times,) that I have no hope of ever being able to remain very long in one spot; besides the contrast with the darkness that would necessarily follow lengthened sunshine would be unbearable.”

“What can Mr Beverley mean,” thought Mabel; “is he excusing himself for leaving me? does he fancy that I am expecting him to play the part of an “innamorato,” and that I shall be disappointed if he does not kneel down, and offer me his own fascinating self and all his worldly goods? For a moment her pride was aroused; she determined that the advantage should be on her side, as she said, coolly—

“You are enigmatical, Mr Beverley; you are not in general given to moralizing, but, on the contrary, are much more naturally



occupied in amusing those who are fortunate to have so agreeable a companion. I think it quite absurd to throw all advantages and pleasures away, because you cannot command an unlimited supply of them."

"But some trials are so much harder to bear than others."

"Surely you have not had many hard trials to endure?" returned Mabel, laughing, and casting a searching glance at her companion. "If you have, you must either have a charmed life, or no heart! It appears as if you met all states of existence with an imperturbable equanimity."

"Now really, Miss Neville, I think you are very hard-hearted! Do you think we appear what we are inwardly? That we possess what we most covet—you should give me credit for extreme fortitude and good temper, at least."

"I do so, and perhaps for something more," replied Mabel.

"I try to enjoy the sweet, and pass lightly over the bitter. Is that not calculated to call forth your praise?"

"Perhaps so—but all have not your power of control—of condensing the good, and evaporating the evil."

"Those who have not, lose the greatest charm of life."

"But I had rather see everything in its true light—at least, I think so," she added, gravely. "I like to feel that I can make up my mind to what is my lot—namely, living in comparative seclusion on the confines of this grand, mysterious, poetry-speaking forest. Many, I am aware, would sigh away their life doomed to such retirement." And Mabel thought of her friend Florence, and her love for worldly excitement.

“ I am convinced, more and more each day, that we are very dependent creatures, not only upon each other, but upon circumstances. I believe if I had been brought up in a woodman’s cottage, I should have handled an axe marvellously well.”

“ I cannot fancy those very aristocratic hands labouring for their own support.”

“ I fear, indeed, I am but of little use in the world; and you, I think, Miss Neville, agree with me.”

“ Why do you put me to the torture of replying to such a question?” replied Mabel, laughing. “ Besides, I think you are in a controversial mood—whichever side I advocate, I fancy you will oppose.”

“ Well, I will turn round and confess, that I think, with all my *dolce far niente* life, I am of as much use as hundreds of my species, who are not rich enough to keep a pack of

fox-hounds for the benefit of adjoining counties ; who have no venerable parents entirely dependent upon their filial attention ; or whose sisters, being rich and handsome, have no need of their brother's introductions. Now, can you tell me how I may be of more use in the world than I have hitherto been ?" he continued, anxious to engage Mabel's attention at any risk.

" No, it is impossible ! I am really quite puzzled ; every scheme I devise is chased away by half-a-dozen others. In short, yours is a hopeless case."

" I have neither learning, nor wit, nor money, nor—"

" If you are seriously asking advice, I should say we all had some talent, for which we shall be accountable. You must settle down into a quiet country life. There is Mr Dalrymple, for instance."

“A very unfavourable specimen—you are not in earnest, Miss Neville. Would you have me misanthropical, dull, melancholy, austere?”

“You have, at last, come to the end of his failings,” exclaimed Mabel, with some warmth, for she knew Mr Dalrymple was no favourite with Beverley. “He has a grand soul, and kind heart, which it is well to appreciate.”

“If you appreciate them, I am convinced Mr Dalrymple will be satisfied,” replied Beverley, rather mortified at the tone Mabel assumed. “But, may I find some slight favour in your eyes—will you undertake my hopeless reform?”

“Certainly not; but I am glad you at least acknowledge it is hopeless,” and Mabel laughed merrily. “In the first place, I should have been bound to set you a good example;

now we shall neither of us influence the other very materially."

"That is unkind. I am afraid the happiest part of my useless life will have left a sting behind it. I believe you have allowed me a buoyant disposition; I must draw largely upon it in future. What should I be—what would most of us be, if we were constantly weighed down by the recollection of moments which prudence tells us had better be quickly forgotten."

"Ah! there you fly before your enemy, instead of facing him. I find you are not superior, after all. I had rather encounter an unpleasant possibility, than shrink from examining into its details."

"But I dare not look back upon these last happy days. Perhaps you are right in laying claim to a courage which does not belong to me."

“ You must first prove that I have need of courage. Yes, I grant that these last days have been very pleasant—very merry and happy.”

“ But I feel more—they must not be repeated. If I were anything else but a wanderer in this beautiful world—if I might allow myself to be touched by the alchemist, which turns all to gold! As it is, I must look upon life as a game, in which the most fortunate wins the highest stakes.”

He was in earnest, and felt more than he cared to show. He had a heart after all! comparatively slight though its pleadings were, and worldly though he was by nature, as well as habit. But his last words were not pleasing to Mabel. She fancied she discovered in them traces of the light, volatile, transient feelings to which he had no right to give



utterance. Perhaps, too, she ought to be displeased with herself. Her thoughtless conversation might have given him reason to think that she was but a heartless coquette, and that he was privileged to treat her as such. Her pride and vanity were more hurt than gratified by the half avowal that had been uttered. She looked at Beverley steadily, with an expression of vexation on her countenance which it rarely wore.

“ I dare say we are all very much like each other in some respects,” she at length calmly replied—“ what we fancy to-day, we disapprove of to-morrow ; and what we at one moment earnestly covet, we discard negligently when gained.”

Her expression of displeasure had not been unnoticed by Beverley. He would not have offended her for the world ; but his excuses

were not destined to be available, for while he was endeavouring to re-establish himself in her good opinion their *tete-à-tete* was interrupted.

END OF VOL. I.

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